

GEORGE SOROS: PROBLEMS OF GLOBALISM / FICTION BY BOBBIE ANN MASON

The Atlantic Monthly

JANUARY 1998

The Great Climate Flip-flop

Global warming could,
paradoxically, cause a sudden
and catastrophic cooling



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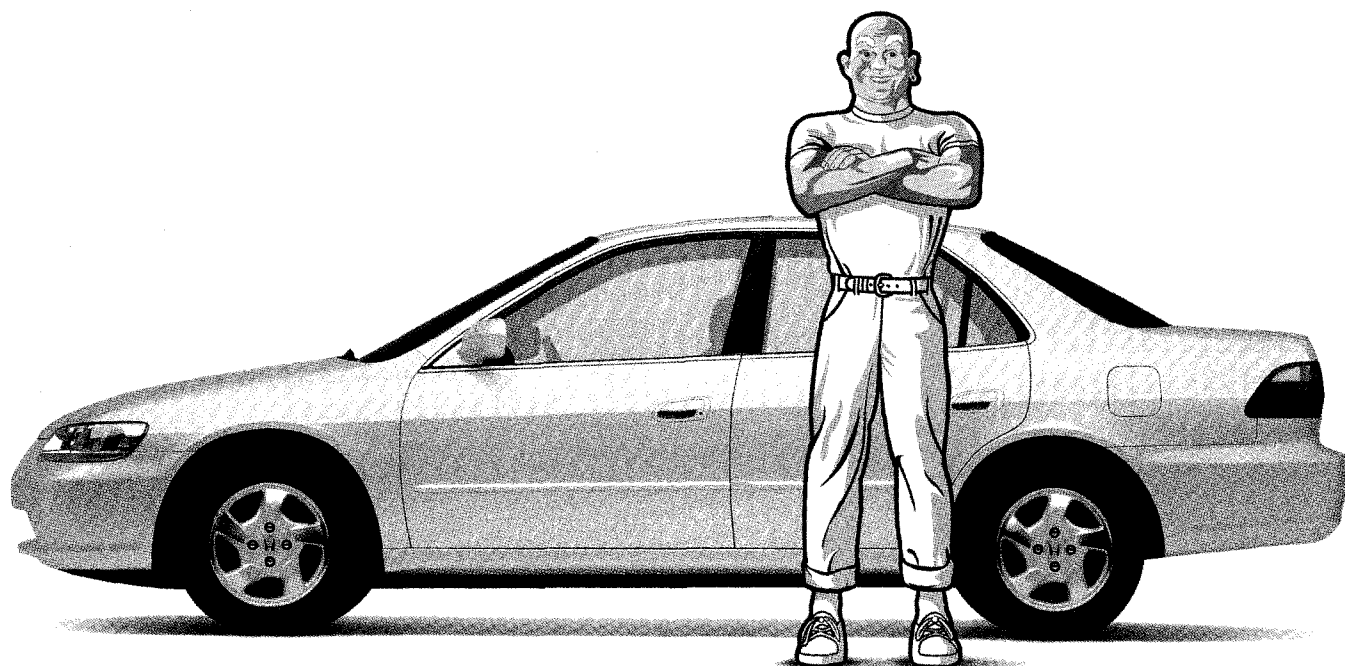


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by WILLIAM H. CALVIN



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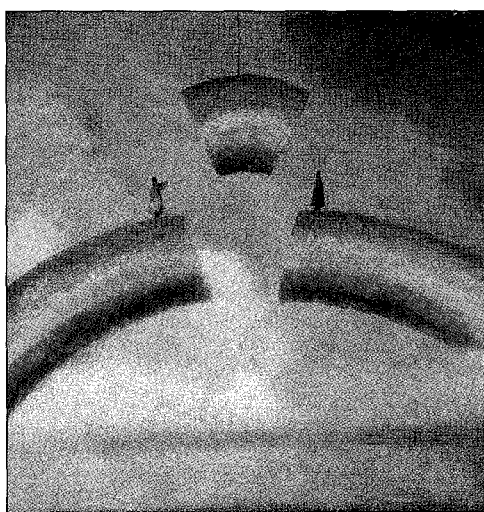
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HONDA
Thinking.



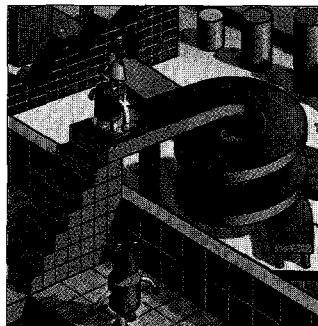
Y O U R M O N E Y ? O R Y O U R H E A L T H ?

Since day one, the measure of good health care in America has been held hostage by a faulty equation: The most money buys the best care. The unfortunate legacy of the old fee-for-service system is it did a better job of raising costs than quality. ■ Can any system raise the quality of health care for Americans while controlling its costs? We believe the answer is an unqualified yes. ■ First off, the best care cannot be defined as the most expensive or the least expensive. *It is the right care delivered at the right time. Ideally,*

it's a measure taken to prevent an illness before it ever occurs. Like an immunization, for instance. Or one that catches a disease early enough that something can be done about it. ■ That's why our women's program was the first to cover annual mammograms for all women over 40. We know what it costs, but by treating breast cancer in its earliest stages, we also know what it can save. ■ The best care can even halt the progression of chronic disease. Our congestive heart failure program provides a cardiac nurse to educate at-risk members on the importance of taking prescribed medications, and to help them make lifestyle adjustments. The result has been a significant decline in hospitalization rates and an overall improvement in patient well-being. ■ Not coincidentally, our model of prevention, early detection and chronic disease management promotes better health, with the added value of lowering health care costs. Which in turn enables companies such as ours to provide more people than ever the best choices modern medicine can offer. And do so without offering the one choice no one should ever again have to make: *Their money? Or their health?*



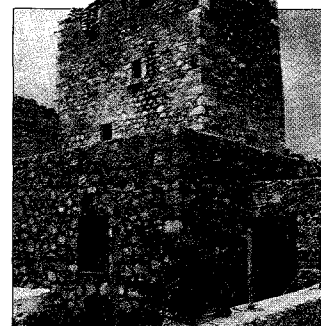
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Over the millennia temperature change on our planet has not always occurred gradually: warmings and coolings, we now know, have sometimes been both profound and abrupt. There is good reason to believe that global warming could trigger a "climate flip" that results in not warmth, as popular scenarios would have it, but a catastrophic cooling. Stabilizing the climate is not a simple matter—and cutting down on greenhouse gases may not suffice.

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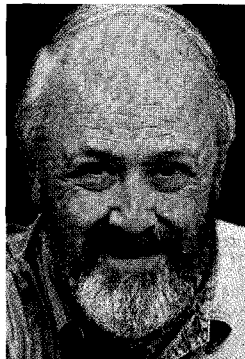


77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

ALTHOUGH William H. Calvin, the author of this month's cover story, "The Great Climate Flip-flop," says that he is "not primarily an author," readers would be forgiven for assuming that he does nothing but write. A theoretical neurophysiologist at the University of Washington at Seattle, Calvin has written nine books, including five in the past seven years and two (*How Brains Think* and *The Cerebral Code*) just last year. But he also maintains a punishingly busy schedule as a researcher, investigating how brains work and evolve, and travels extensively on the lecture circuit. Readers would therefore also be forgiven for wondering why Calvin devotes so much of his precious time to following the study of climate change.

The answer, Calvin says, is that the evolution of the human mind is intimately linked to abrupt climate change: our brains seem to have begun their transformation from apelike to fully human just when temperatures on earth began their current trend of jumping rapidly—often within a single lifetime—between warm and cold. Calvin argues that in the context of brief environmental opportunities (periods of warmth) and hazards (sudden icy temperatures), survival for our ancestors became dependent on having highly

agile, "jack-of-all-trades" minds. The flip-flop of climates, in other words, led to the evolution of brains that could themselves flip-flop abruptly between strategies for survival. In describing the minds that we have ended up with, Calvin is fond of referring to a passage by William James that appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in October, 1880. "Instead of thoughts of concrete things patiently following one another," James wrote,



DOUG VANDERHOOF

we have the most abrupt cross-cuts and transitions from one idea to another, the most rarefied abstractions and discriminations, the most unheard-of combinations . . . we seem suddenly introduced into a seething caldron of ideas, where everything is fizzling and bobbing about in a state of bewildering activity.

Creative thinking is now more important than ever. A central point in "The Great Climate Flip-flop" is that the greenhouse gases we pump daily into the atmosphere may well trigger an abrupt global *cooling*. But if we have helped to bring on such a problem, we are also the only creatures on the planet with brains highly enough evolved to solve it—and solve it we must, even if, as Calvin points out, it won't make our brains any larger. —THE EDITORS

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Whitney Balliett ("Sitting In") has been *The New Yorker's* jazz critic for forty years. His work has won an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Balliett's most recent book is *American Musicians II* (1997).

Guy Billout (cover art) has received many awards for his magazine and advertising work, including gold and silver medals from the Society of Illustrators. He is the author of several children's books, including *Journey* (1993), and is a regular contributor to *Le Monde*, in Paris.

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Mary Karr ("Beauty and the Shoe Sluts") is the author of *The Liars' Club* (1995), a memoir. Her third collection of poems, *Viper Rum*, will be published this spring.

Bobbie Ann Mason ("Charger") is the author of *Shiloh and Other Stories* (1982), which won the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award for First Fiction, and the novels *In Country* (1985) and *Feather Crowns* (1993). A selection of her short stories, *Midnight Magic*, will be published this spring.

William Matthews ("No Return"), who died in November, was a professor of English at City College, in New York. His latest collection of poems, *Time & Money* (1995), received the National Book Critics Circle Award.

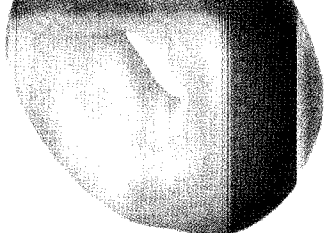
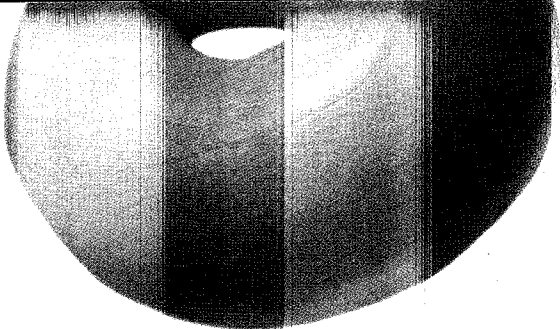
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Jeffrey Tayler ("A Greece to Be Discovered") is a writer who lives in Moscow.



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LETTERS

Music of Silence

Phyllis Rose ("The Music of Silence," October *Atlantic*) should consider the possibility that the reason "I will never get [my subject, Alain] to see my having written what he told me as anything but a violation of a confidence" is that that is precisely what it was. This is the kind of article that makes me think all writers should be belled, to warn passersby.

Anita Janda
Kew Gardens, N.Y.

If Phyllis Rose had put the last paragraph of her Brief Lives essay first, I would not have read it. How could she violate the wishes of someone who confided in her—and how could you publish this violation?

Penny Power
Baltimore, Md.

I enjoyed Phyllis Rose's essay up to the point that she revealed that the subject of the piece had objected to its being written and had asked her not to have it published. At that point I felt as if I had been duped into invading this man's privacy.

Rose justifies her rude behavior by insisting that her "national temperament" compels her to make things known. Tact and consideration are learned traits, not a derivative of one's national gene pool.

The subject of her essay has chosen to live as a hermit, separated from the world for spiritual purposes. How selfish Rose is, for denying him that seclusion for professional (commercial) purposes. How condescending of her to complain that she'll never convince him that her essay is anything more than a breach of confidence.

Mark Graham
Cameron, Mo.

Phyllis Rose has violated trust by writing and publishing "The Music of Silence." Not only did she publish against the express wishes of her brother-in-law,

but she brought us, the readers, into her exploitation. When I found, in the last paragraph of the story, that "Alain" had not wanted her to write or publish about him, I felt as though I had been a partner to a crime. If Ms. Rose had been writing to correct the wrongs of some abusive system, I would stand by her right to "make things known"; when she is presenting a personal reflection, I believe she has a responsibility to honor the wishes of her subject. Surely she would want the same respect.

Rebecca Graber
Brattleboro, Vt.

Phyllis Rose replies:

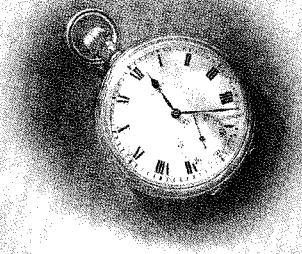
Writers are not professionally sworn to secrecy and do not, like psychiatrists and priests, promise confidentiality. On the contrary, it's their responsibility to testify.

The writer's commitment to testimony and the monk's commitment to silence are incompatible and represent a serious difference of opinion and temperament, which I mentioned not to congratulate myself for being on the "right" side but to acknowledge the other position. My own ethics consist largely of trying to see both sides of a question and behaving with an absence of rancor and fanaticism. I'm not surprised that some people agree with the monk. A lot of me does too.

My critics, however, point to a real dilemma: how can I be truthful about my own life without infringing on somebody else's?

The notion that my "violation of trust" would have been justified if I'd been correcting the wrongs of some abusive system betrays a *60 Minutes* understanding of the kind of truth-telling that goes on in essays and other forms of literature. If exposing abuses justifies what the writer of this letter considers a violation of trust, why shouldn't attempts to offer clarification, inspiration, or solace be justified too?

I object to the cheapening of my motives that equates professional and commercial. The piece demanded to be writ-



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ten because of my mental involvement with my brother-in-law. Both as a member of my family and as someone who had great worldly success and turned his back on it, he figures large in my imagination, putting into perspective the way I live. His withdrawal is an envied possibility, a moral pole. In speaking truthfully about this for myself, I expect in some way to be speaking for others. A writer has no other justification.

Are Schools Failing?

As Peter Schrag notes in "The Near-Myth of Our Failing Schools" (October *Atlantic*), the case against our public schools is based on dubious historical and cross-cultural comparisons of student performance in standardized examinations. Although such instruments have their usefulness, they are not a particularly valid criterion. Far more important is the performance of public school graduates as they take their places in the work force or move on to higher education or advanced technical training. They must become a productive work force, an effective scientific establishment, a creative artistic community, and a strong military.

So how are we doing? We just happen to have the world's most productive work force, the largest economy, the highest material standard of living, more Nobel prizes than the rest of the world combined, the best system of higher education, the best space program, the best high-tech medicine, and the strongest military. And in most of these categories the gap is widening rather than narrowing.

These things could not have been accomplished with second-rate systems of public education.

Walter H. Greene
Hatboro, Pa.

Peter Schrag says that special education "diverts huge sums from the regular classroom." Children with disabilities are *not* a diversion. The whole point of the Americans With Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is that all children are educable and entitled to the fullest possible participation in the school system. All children—both those with and those without disabilities—learn more and learn better when they learn to-

gether. The two biggest handicaps children with disabilities face are architectural barriers and the limiting stereotypes people carry in their heads and hearts. Thus, sadly, less than an A for Mr. Schrag.

Walter J. Kendall III
Chicago, Ill.

Peter Schrag fails to mention the enormously successful home-schooling movement started by John Holt and greatly expanded by Raymond Moore. Home-schoolers not only score higher on college entrance exams and have a warmer home life but also save the taxpayers a packet.

Tertius Chandler
Berkeley, Calif.

Peter Schrag wants to persuade us that American education isn't as bad off as it is frequently portrayed. He cites the 1991 Sandia report, which showed that the education picture was less gloomy than the rhetoric of alarm allowed. The report, he says, was buried for two years by the Department of Energy, which commissioned it.

However, in 1995 the Department of Education released a 150-page study titled *Adult Literacy in America*. It was based on interviews with and test scores of some 26,000 U.S. citizens above the age of sixteen. It didn't get much publicity either. The study showed that 90 million of our 191 million adult citizens possessed inadequate skills in math and reading English. The test used questions relating to everyday skills, such as reading a bus schedule, making out a bank-deposit slip, and understanding information contained in a newspaper.

The study grouped adult Americans into five literacy levels. It found that 40–44 million people functioned at the lowest literacy level, and 50 million at the second-lowest level. The study considered both these literacy levels to be inadequate.

Those are grim statistics, especially when one considers that in 1993 approximately 86 percent of adult citizens had received high school diplomas. The shocking fact is that hundreds of thousands of high school students who are functionally illiterate are awarded diplomas each year. How can anyone defend this practice? It makes the diploma meaningless.

Schrag says, "The dumbest thing we

could do is scrap what we're doing right." Looks like there's precious little to scrap.

Ronald W. Dyke
Bella Vista, Ark.

Peter Schrag replies:

I appreciate Walter Greene's point that the nation's economic, scientific, and technological achievements seem (at least) to belie the claims of abject school failure, though I'm not sure that those achievements necessarily demonstrate the schools' academic success. Shocking as it may seem to all the partisans in our hot educational disputes, the schools, while obviously important, may not by themselves be the ultimate determiners of our national fortunes (or misfortunes). What is certain, as the letter about home schooling reminds us, is that no school, style of instruction, or (perhaps even) set of academic standards is appropriate for every student. Which is to say that almost every blanket statement (perhaps including this one) about "the schools"—their performance, the standards they should set, the way they should operate—is at least partly false, and every attempt to discuss or reform them on such a basis will probably fail.

Whaling

Mark Derr's insightful and timely article "To Whale or Not to Whale" (October *Atlantic*) contains one statement that might be misinterpreted: "The Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort bowhead population appears to be increasing despite continuous hunting by Alaskan Eskimos." This is true as far as it goes. The bowhead population is clearly recovering from the past century's decimation by commercial whalers, and Alaskan Eskimos do take bowhead whales each year for ceremonial and subsistence purposes. Derr's statement implies, however, that whaling by Alaskan Eskimos might take place in a manner that jeopardizes the recovery of this stock. This is not true.

Alaskan bowhead whaling is very carefully managed. The Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort stock of bowhead whales is one of the best-studied stocks in the world. Its status has been intensively investigated, and the scientific basis for management has been thoroughly reviewed by the Scientific Committee of the International



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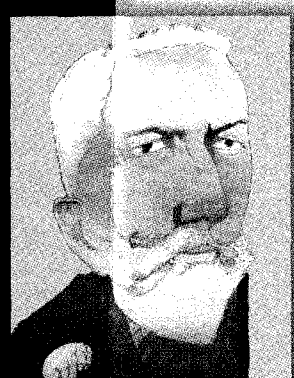
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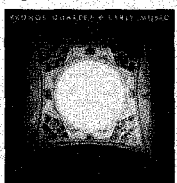
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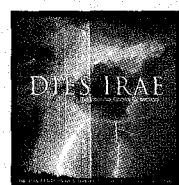
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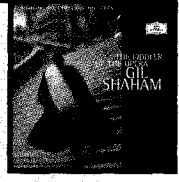
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Whaling Commission. Under IWC rules aboriginal whaling cannot take place unless quotas are low enough to ensure the recovery of the stock. Therefore the bowhead quota set by the IWC is based on a series of conservative assumptions. Eskimo whaling is carefully monitored by the United States through a cooperative agreement with the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, which reports every whale that is struck, let alone landed.

Alaskan bowhead whaling is a model of how to manage a scarce resource. Quotas are based on high-quality science. There is international oversight of a resource that is important to people in other countries. There is an effective program through which the government and local hunters cooperate to ensure that the quotas are not exceeded. It should come as no surprise to anyone that the bowhead population is recovering while Eskimo whaling is taking place.

D. James Baker

*U.S. Commissioner to the
International Whaling Commission
Washington, D.C.*

Mark Derr replies:

D. James Baker is exactly right: Eskimo hunting in no way jeopardizes the well-being of the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort bowhead-whale population. More significant, the experience in Alaska shows that properly managed hunting need not drive whale populations to extinction.

Word Improvisation

In his Word Improvisation for October, J. E. Lighter states that the name of the jeep, a popular wartime military vehicle, came from the *Popeye* comic strip in 1936. My recollection is that "jeep" came from "GP," which was an abbreviation of "general purpose." If memory serves me well, the official designation of the jeep was "truck, 1/4-ton, 4 x 4, GP."

Leonard N. Foster
Glencoe, Ill.

I read with some amusement your October Word Improvisation on POTUS. I have no doubt that the term was used by FDR, who dearly loved short forms. However, it was around a long time before that! My late father, Edward F. Smith, was born in 1890. By 1916 he was a newswire tele-

grapher—or "brasspounder," as they were known in the trade. He operated the fastest leased press wire in the country (at sixteen years of age) for, I believe, the Postal Telegraph Company.

Among his artifacts I have his handwritten notebook of "Phillips Code" abbreviations. This code, used by news telegraphers in conjunction with the original Morse code, includes POTUS for the President of the United States.

Marian L. Helmer
Newton, Kans.

J. E. Lighter states that "the *Oxford English Dictionary* fails to locate any example of *First Lady* before . . . 1948." But the 1931 Pulitzer Prize-winning musical *Of Thee I Sing* concerns a breach-of-promise suit against a newly elected President of the United States by a disgruntled beauty-pageant winner. In Act II, Ira Gershwin has his plaintiff sing,

I might have been First Lady
But now my past is shady
Oh, pity this poor maidie
And there's the man who ought to pay!

William E. Thoms
Evergreen, Colo.

J. E. Lighter replies:

The word *jeep* made its debut in Elzie Segar's comic strip *Thimble Theatre Starring Popeye* on March 3, 1936, as the cry of a small, odd-looking creature soon identified as "Eugene the Jeep."

Acknowledging Segar, the Halliburton Oil Well Cementing Company built a "Jeep" truck in 1937. Army command cars and heavy gun tractors were called "jeeps" in 1940–1941, as were raw recruits. The soon-to-be-famous "jeeps" ("truck, 1/4-ton, 4 x 4") arrived late in 1940; some called them "peeps," to distinguish them from the larger vehicles. Field-testing selected Willys-Overland's "Model MA" over American Bantam's "BRC" and Ford's fortuitously named "Model GP." The well-publicized "jeep" driven up the Capitol steps in February of 1941 was a Willys. All three designs were scout cars, none was built to "general purpose" specs, and without Popeye, Ford's prototype "GP" might have been the "gupp."

Thanks to Marian Helmer, who wrote to place POTUS within the Phillips Code, and to William Thoms for a 1931 *First Lady*. Now, can anybody find a pre-1993 *First Car*?

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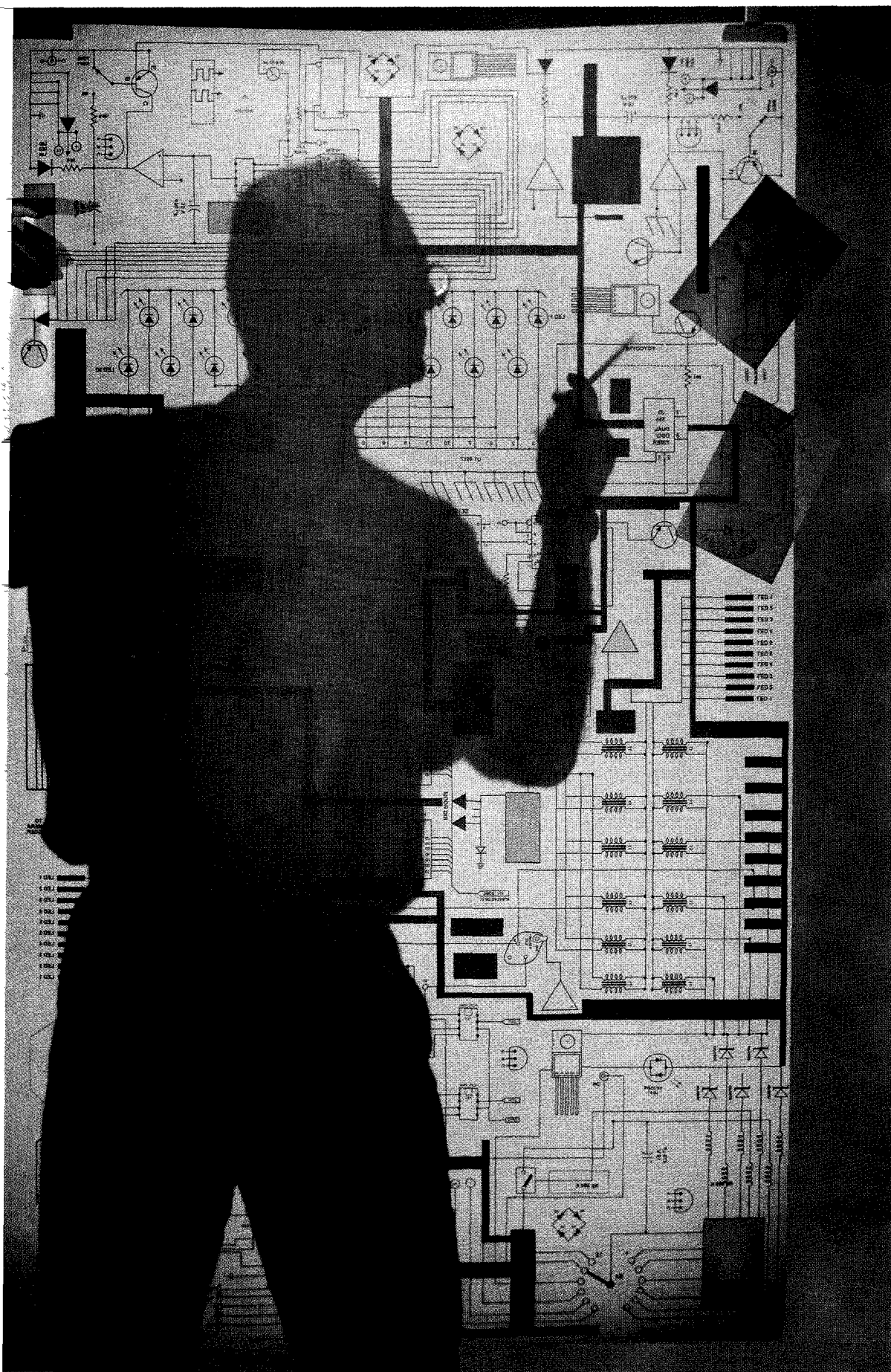
Printing papers such as our Hammermill® brand Jet Print Ultra® are one example. They enable anyone with an ink jet printer to print with the sort of brightness and smoothness you'd expect from fine magazines.

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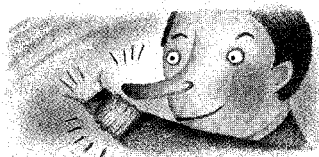


Demographics

January is the least matrimonial of months: fewer couples get married in January than in any other month, and divorce lawyers typically have their busiest month of the year. Lawyers attribute the surge in business in part to couples who, for their children's sake or for financial reasons, wait until after the holidays to implement a decision reached earlier. Others seeking counsel in January are motivated by the hope for a fresh beginning that comes with a new year, or are determined not to spend another holiday season with their spouses or in-laws. In recent years divorce settlements have placed an increasing number of ex-husbands on the receiving end of alimony payments, as women have secured better, higher-paying jobs. (In 1979 the U.S. Supreme Court declared that state laws requiring only men to pay alimony were unconstitutional.) The number of ex-husbands awarded child custody is also on the rise: families headed by single fathers are now the fastest-growing kind of family.

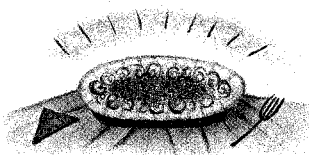
Expiring Patent

No. 4,244,057. Nasal Drip Absorbing Device. "In combination with an article of outer clothing, a nasal drip absorbing device . . . comprising . . . a disposable absorbent pad formed of multiple layers of absorbent tissue . . . secured to the [user's sleeve]; whereby the user can absorb nasal drip in the pad conveniently without reaching into a pocket for other absorbent material."



Health & Safety

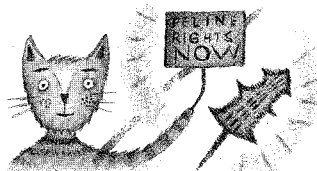
This month two San Francisco clinics begin trials of a "morning-after" pill regimen aimed at preventing HIV infection among those who may have been exposed to the virus within the previous 72 hours through sex or syringes. The program, sponsored by private donors and the city and county of San Francisco, is an effort to extend to the public immediate-postexposure prevention—commonly available to health-care workers accidentally exposed to HIV. Researchers will be evaluating such things as patient compliance (the treatment involves taking various drugs at precise intervals for 28 days) and side effects. Although the study will be limited to 500 patients, the regimen, along with counseling, will be offered to all applicants who believe they may have been exposed. Some worry that such a safety net could encourage unsafe sex and needle sharing. Wariness of sexually transmitted diseases seems to be waning: a nationwide study found that gonorrhea rates among gay men rose by 74 percent from 1993 to 1996.



Food

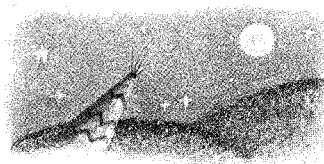
January 1: Starting today, according to a new Food and Drug Administration rule, most enriched grain products, from bread to pasta to grits, will be fortified with folic acid. The FDA action is aimed at ensuring adequate folic acid consumption among women of childbearing age. The nutrient reduces the risk of neural-tube birth defects, especially spina bifida, which affect some 2,500 newborns each year. Because these defects occur within a month of conception, before many women

know they are pregnant, even women whose pregnancies were planned may not get enough folic acid at the critical time. The FDA's ruling has been controversial. Some argue that fortification usurps consumer control and freedom of choice, and that folic acid is readily available in leafy green vegetables, citrus fruits, dried beans, and other foods. Others contend that the risks of ingesting too much folic acid—an overabundance of which is thought, for example, to mask the symptoms of pernicious anemia, which can lead to permanent nerve damage—have not been sufficiently explored.



Government

January 1: Feline rights get a boost in New York today, as a law takes effect stipulating a \$100 fine for any motorist who after hitting a cat fails to try to find the owner or to get in touch with the police. New York has for decades fined drivers who fled the scenes of accidents with horses, cows, and dogs, all considered working or farm animals; today's "flat cat" law is thought to be the first to give such protection to purely domestic pets. 19: Today for the first time the nation's two biggest stock markets, the New York Stock Exchange and NASDAQ, close for Martin Luther King's birthday; previously they marked the day with a moment of silence. Also this month the U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments about who owns Ellis Island and its museum and monuments: New York, New Jersey, or both. The island originally belonged to New York; however, additional area created over the years by landfill covered territory claimed by New Jersey.



The Skies

January 1: The waxing crescent Moon passes very close to Jupiter, low in the southwestern sky after sundown. 3: The Quadrantid meteor shower peaks today. Viewing will be best in the predawn hours; observers should look to the northeast. 12: Full Moon, also known this month as the Wolf Moon and the Moon of Frost in the Teepee. 20: Mars and Jupiter lie close together, low in the southwest after sunset; the young crescent Moon joins them on the 29th.

100 Years Ago

John Muir, writing in the January, 1898, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "The tendency nowadays to wander in wildernesses is delightful to see. Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life. Awakening from the stupefying effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury, they are trying as best they can to mix and enrich their own little ongoings with those of Nature, and to get rid of rust and disease. Briskly venturing and roaming, some are . . . jumping from rock to rock, feeling the life of them, learning the songs of them, panting in whole-souled exercise and rejoicing in deep, long-drawn breaths of pure wildness."





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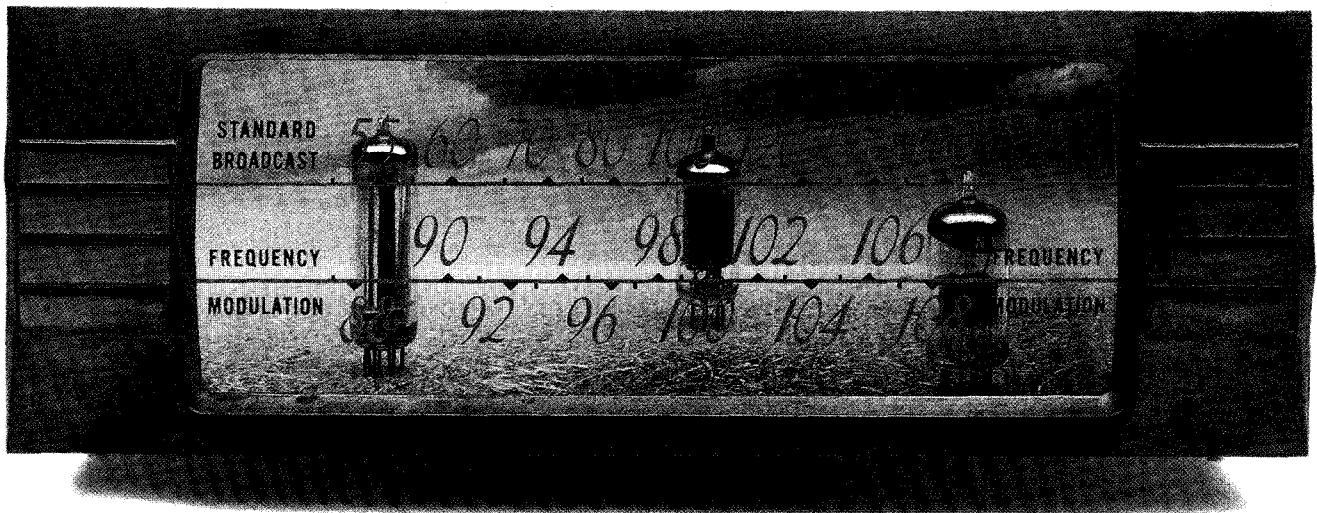
It's Radi-0!

*The medium that can turn anywhere
into somewhere*

NEWSPAPERS and television networks ran a story not long ago about a Briton who invented a windup radio, which has been successfully manufactured and marketed. It works on the same principle as did the crank-operated phonographs and music boxes of many decades past; in this case winding the crank coils a spring that when released turns a generator that produces enough electricity to operate the radio for about half an hour. This new radio has apparently come as a boon to several Third World countries, where people who

in use in the United States; on average, Americans over the age of eleven spend three hours and eighteen minutes of every weekday listening to at least one of them.

I don't mention this to make the case that radio is "better" than other electronic media (I use and enjoy all of them), but I will say that it is different, very different. Radio is special to people. And in an era when we in the West have so many other media available to us, media that can "do" so much more than radio ever could, radio still inspires a kind of



were prevented by the high cost of batteries from owning and using radios are now hooked into the broadcast media for the very first time. They benefit greatly from public-service announcements regarding health and safety.

The obvious "How about that!" angle to this story is "How about that! A windup radio!" Then there's

the obvious subtext: "How about that! A place where people can't afford batteries!"

And the obvious sub-subtext: "How about that! A place where radio is still important!"

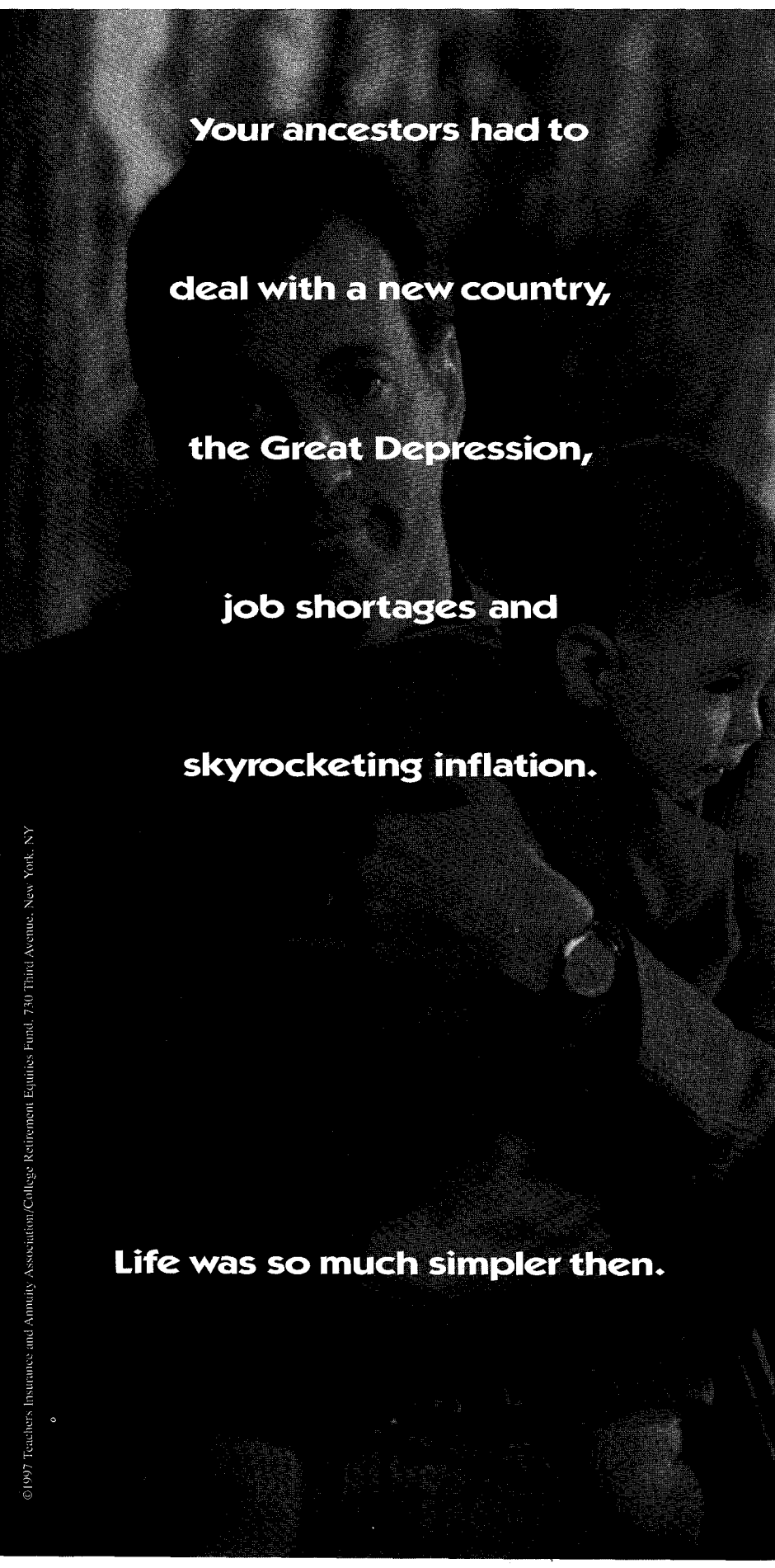
The truth is that radio has not been eclipsed by television and cable and the Internet. In fact, radio is as popular as it has ever been. According to the Consumer Electronics Manufacturers Association, 675 million radio receivers are currently

loyalty that premium channels and Web sites cannot claim.

This loyalty is largely due to radio's very limitations. Radio can't dazzle us with visual spectacles; it has to capture and hold our attention aurally. That is, it has to speak to us, through either words or music. Couple this with the fact that radio is a curiously intimate medium: people tend to feel that they are connecting with their radios one-on-one. This is generally

not the case with television, where the individual viewer invariably senses that he or she is nothing more than an anonymous, statistically insignificant part of a huge and diverse audience. But because radio is a "smaller" medium (many low-powered mom-and-pop operations, which were never part of television, still exist on radio), the individual lis-

by Richard Rubin



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deal with a new country,
the Great Depression,
job shortages and
skyrocketing inflation.**

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tener can somehow believe that the signal is traveling direct and uninterrupted from the studio microphone to his set alone, that the announcer is speaking and playing records just for him. Few people exploited this quality as well as did Franklin Delano Roosevelt. His radio "Fireside Chats" endeared him to countless listeners, who reported feeling during his broadcasts as if the President were sitting in their parlor and talking with them like a next-door neighbor. Roosevelt is given credit for his ability to use the new medium so effectively, but a case could be made that it was actually the nature of the new medium, its peculiar power and personality, that made Roosevelt so effective on it.

Intimacy is itself both cause and effect of another singular truth about radio: most people, most of the time, listen to their radios in solitude. Radio, then, is usually more than just a medium; it is company. Whether it is the company of first choice or of last resort makes no difference. It is a reliable and tireless buffer between solitude and loneliness, and for this it is often regarded, consciously or otherwise, as an old and valued friend.

I had no real use for radio until after I graduated from college. I was born in New York City in the late 1960s, and grew up in its dense suburbs toward the end of the transition from black-and-white to color television. In junior high school twenty-channel cable TV came along; in high school we got "microcomputers," which boasted two whole kilobytes of random-access memory and built-in cassette decks for information storage. In retrospect, of course, these innovations look hopelessly crude, but at the time they were more than enough to render radio seemingly irrelevant to my life.

Then I found myself working as a reporter at a daily newspaper in the Mississippi Delta. The Delta is a place that can blind you, if not drive you mad, with its sameness and isolation. It is endlessly flat and relentlessly rural. My job often required me to drive great distances, usually on long, straight two-lane roads flanked by vast plantation fields. It was not at all unusual for me to travel many miles without seeing another car, a house,

or even a road sign. In such an atmosphere it is not difficult to imagine that one is the last person on the planet. Not difficult, and not pleasant, either.

On one such journey I turned off my car's tape deck and started listening to its radio. I can't say exactly what day that happened, or why, but I can say, with confidence, that the first day I listened to the radio while driving through the Delta was also the last day I used the tape deck. The radio was the perfect antidote for the paralyzing remoteness of the Delta. It didn't matter anymore that I couldn't detect any evidence of humankind on a lonely stretch of Highway 49; I could always turn on the radio and hear a human voice. Soon I figured out which stations carried national radio-network news and talk programs (Radio networks! Who could have imagined that such a thing still existed in the late 1980s!), and I



came to regard these programs as an umbilical cord to the world back home. I varied my listening regimen even further to incorporate local low-wattage stations as well—stations where the announcers spoke in a thick drawl about who had been born or died or gotten married or divorced or was spotted eating lunch this afternoon at the little restaurant across the street. I began to realize that radio—this medium I had once considered so antiquated as to be nearly useless—could do more even than preserve my sanity and defeat my homesickness: it could provide me with a wealth of information on, and a hearty appreciation for, a place

as different from my home town as any in the country.

It was also in Mississippi that I discovered what might be my favorite thing about radio—its durability. Sometimes on clear nights I would get in my car and drive out of town, out along the narrow highways of the Delta, where we—my car and I—would be surrounded by a darkness so intense that it seemed tangible. Often I drove without any particular destination in mind. My real objective on these trips was simply to motor around the back roads while sliding back and forth along the AM dial to see what distant, exotic stations I could pull in. I was never disappointed. Way out there, on a plain a hundred miles wide, far, far away from anywhere that could reasonably be classified as somewhere, I picked up stations from St. Louis and Denver and Houston and Detroit and Philadelphia and Omaha and Boston and Kansas City and Washington and Chicago and Minneapolis and New York.

I don't believe in magic, but I do know that sitting in my car in the middle of Mississippi and listening to a signal that traveled more than a thousand miles, over nearly a dozen states, and came down into my car through a metal pole antenna and two paper-cone speakers, was as near to a magical experience as ever I'm likely to have.

Sometimes on my drives I would actually go somewhere: a very small AM radio station, housed in a wooden shack thirty-five miles northwest of my town and just off Highway 61. I had a friend, Greg, who moonlighted at this station almost every night, working alone among the tape cartridges and control panels. At night the station dropped its local programming in favor of a satellite feed that originated somewhere in Colorado. The feed's programming was truly insipid—mostly fifteen-year-old bubble-gum music punctuated by a monotonous male voice that didn't identify itself or the station or even the songs but merely recited quasi-religious homilies such as "A man with faith and family is a rich man indeed" and "Have you done your part today?" Twice an hour, though, Greg got to interrupt the feed to announce the local time, the weather, and the station's call letters.

Sometimes, if he had any, he would read some news or make announcements. Greg told me that on any given night he had anywhere from three to eight listeners. Whenever I stopped by, he would toss me a pair of headphones and we would chat on the air, an event that never failed to elicit a phone call from at least one of those listeners, someone grateful for a break in the routine. Usually we would put the caller on the air too; the station's owner was fast asleep by that time, and no one would tell.

■ ■ ■

A year later, when I was a graduate student in Alabama, I decided to seek employment at the school's FM radio station to make some extra money. I ended up hosting my own show, playing jazz from ten at night until two in the morning several nights a week. That station was very powerful, 100,000 watts with a second 50,000-watt transmitter some three hours away, so our signal covered a huge area—most of northern Alabama, along with parts of Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee—and my listenership often climbed into double digits. We had a toll-free number, so people weren't shy about calling, and many did, from dozens of small towns I'd never heard of and couldn't even find on the station's gigantic wall map. They called for any number of reasons—to request a song or an artist, to rib me for mispronouncing the name of their county, to ask where I was from and what I was doing in Alabama and how I liked the place. Most times, I think, they called for no reason at all except to make contact with someone who had made contact with them and to express, without saying it outright, their appreciation. Like Greg, I worked at the station alone, and I was as thankful for the contact as they. It is a powerful feeling to send your voice out into the night over thousands of square miles, and it is powerfully gratifying to know that that voice is being heard, by real people sitting in real living rooms in real houses.

My responsibilities at the station included reading news, public-service announcements, and emergency bulletins that came in on a telex machine in a room down the hall from the studio. The bulletins usually originated at the National Weather Service office in Birmingham, and usually concerned severe thunderstorms or tornadoes spotted

somewhere in the listening area. When I got one of them, I would interrupt the music and read it immediately (this was my opportunity to mispronounce county names like Autauga and Etowah). One night I was reading just such a bulletin when a tornado came through and ripped our main transmitter out of the ground. A week later, on the first night the station was back on the air, I had no sooner started my program than I began receiving phone calls on the studio line. There were no requests that night, no suggestions; every single call was a variation on the night's first, in which a middle-aged woman named April shouted in my ear, "Praise Jesus! I reckoned you were dead!"

■ ■ ■

My own experiences aside, I've long believed that the truest measure of the impact of any cultural phenomenon is the number of popular songs written about it. On this scale few things can beat radio. From the Charleston swing of "Radio Lady O' Mine" to the disco beat of "On the Radio" to dozens of other songs that correspond to no known dance craze or musical movement, radio has inspired a legion of songwriters to endow us with or inflict upon us a legion of radio songs. My favorite is one I first heard on a thick 1923 Edison disc I stumbled upon at a garage sale in Clanton, Alabama. The song, "Love Her by Radio," was sung by the tenor Billy Jones. Its chorus goes like this:

Love her by radio.
You will find it's Radi-O!
If you want to reach your heart's
desire,
you won't have to send her word
by wire—
you'd never buy her.
Love her by radio,
even when you're all alone.

Anytime you feel that you would
like to sit and spoon,
Why, send your message through the
air, she'll get it very soon.
But first of all, make up your mind.
Your hearts are both in tune—
when you love her by the
radiophone.

The fact that an expression like "It's Radi-O!" actually entered our lexicon, if only transiently, says it all. Someday, perhaps, young hipsters might cotton to saying "That's Inter-Net!" But I doubt it. ☼

Oh, the Possibilities!



There are so many possible choices to fill your cup. A can of pre-ground coffee? A well-aged bag of beans from supermarket shelves? Perhaps some indifferently roasted beans whose potential has been squandered along the way? *Don't do it!* Don't waste time and money on coffee that leaves your palate cold.

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Toward a Global Open Society

A billionaire financier, wrongly accused of being a hypocritical capitalist for his February Atlantic cover story, "The Capitalist Threat," returns to the fray

LET me start with the obvious. We do live in a global economy. But it is important to be clear about what we mean by that. A global economy is characterized not only by the free movement of goods and services but, more important, by the free movement of ideas and of capital. This applies to direct

by George Soros

investments and to financial transactions. Though both have been gaining in importance since the end of the Second World War, the globalization of financial markets in particular has accelerated in recent years to the point where movements in exchange rates, interest rates, and stock prices in various coun-

tries are intimately interconnected. In this respect the character of the financial markets has changed out of all recognition during the forty years that I have been involved in them. So the global economy should really be thought of as the global capitalist system.

Global integration has brought tremendous benefits: the benefits of the international division of labor, which are so clearly proved by the theory of comparative advantage; dynamic benefits such as economies of scale and the rapid spread of innovations from one country to another, which are less easy to demonstrate by static equilibrium theory; and such equally important noneconomic benefits as the freedom of choice associated with the international movement of goods, capital, and people, and the freedom of thought associated with the international movement of ideas.

But global capitalism is not without its problems, and we need to understand these better if we want the system to survive. By focusing on the problems I'm not trying to belittle the benefits that globalization has brought, as some readers of my previous *Atlantic* article assumed. The benefits of the present global capitalist system, I believe, can be sustained only by deliberate and persis-

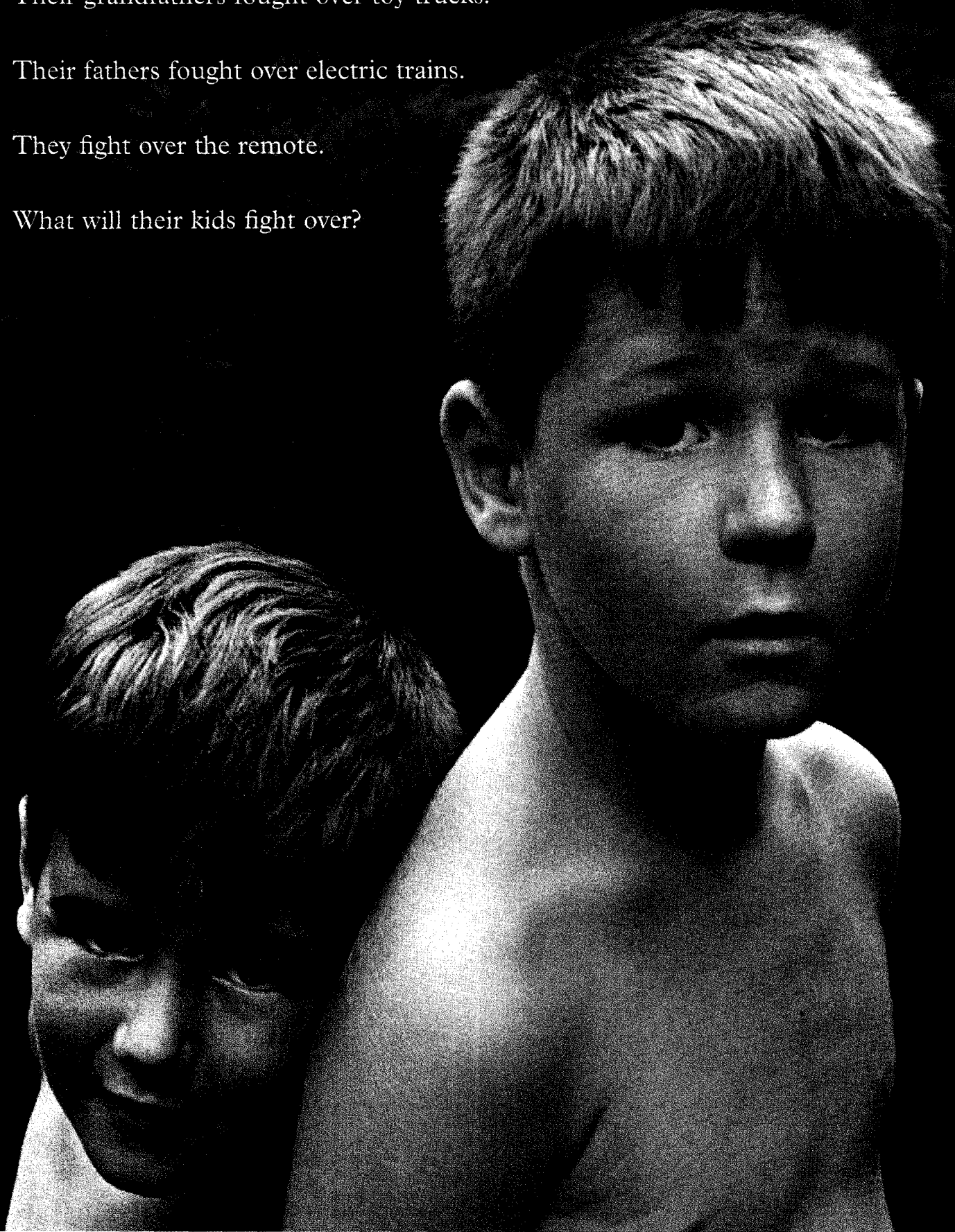


Their grandfathers fought over toy trucks.

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tent efforts to correct and contain the system's deficiencies. That is where I am at loggerheads with laissez-faire ideology, which contends that free markets are self-sustaining and market excesses will correct themselves, provided that gov-

movements are notorious for their boom-bust pattern. During a boom capital flows from the center to the periphery, but when confidence is shaken it has a tendency to return to its source. I have seen many ebbs and flows and booms and busts, and

though I fully recognize that international capital markets have become much more institutional in character and demonstrate much greater resilience, I cannot believe that the present boom will not be followed by a bust until history proves me wrong.

The risk of a breakdown is greatly increased by the fact that our theo-

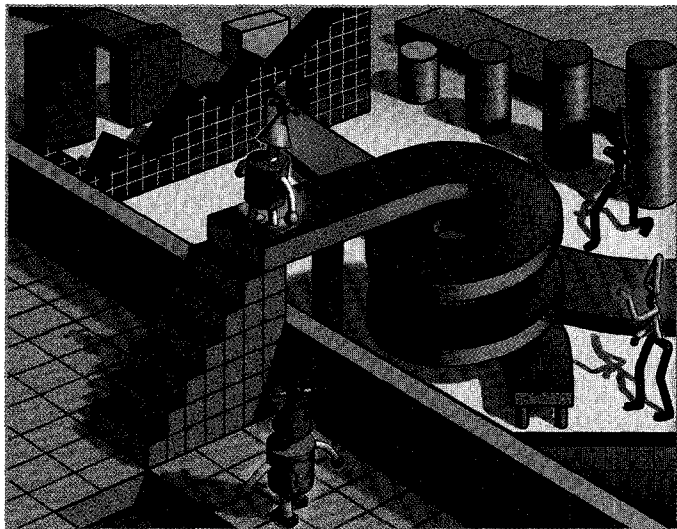
retical understanding of how financial markets operate is fundamentally flawed. Economic theory has been built on the misleading concept of equilibrium. In my view, equilibrium is elusive because market participants are trying to discount a future that is itself shaped by market expectations. For instance, a company whose stock is overvalued can use that to justify the inflated expectations of its shareholders, but only up to a point. This renders the outcome indeterminate, and it is only by accident that the actual course of events corresponds to prevailing expectations. Market participants, if they are rational, will recognize that they are shooting at a moving target rather than discounting a future equilibrium. The theory of rational expectations makes the heroic assumption that market participants as a group are in a position to discount the future accurately. That assumption may yield a hypothetical equilibrium, but it has little relevance to actual market behavior—and neither market operators nor regulators have ever fully accepted the theory, exactly because they are rational people. I am told that economic theory has gone a long way toward recognizing and studying disequilibrium situations. Nevertheless, the laissez-faire idea that markets should be left to their own devices remains very influential. I consider it a dangerous idea. The instability of finan-

cial markets can cause serious economic and social dislocations.

The question poses itself: What should be done to preserve the stability of the financial system? This cannot be answered in the abstract, because every situation is different. Financial markets are best understood as a historical process, and history never quite repeats itself. The recent turmoil in Asian markets raises difficult questions about currency pegs, asset bubbles, inadequate banking supervision, and the lack of financial information which cannot be ignored. Markets cannot be left to correct their own mistakes, because they are likely to overreact and to behave in an indiscriminate fashion.

3. Instability is not confined to the financial system, however. The goal of competitors is to prevail, not to preserve competition in the market. The natural tendency for monopolies and oligopolies to arise needs to be constrained by regulations. The process of globalization is too recent for this to have become a serious issue on a global level, but since we are dealing with a historical process, in time it will.

4. But whose job is it to prevent undue concentration of power and to preserve stability in financial markets? This brings me to the role of the state. Since the end of the Second World War the state has played an increasing role in maintaining economic stability, striving to ensure



ernments or regulators don't interfere with the self-correcting mechanism.

Let me group the deficiencies of the global capitalist system under five main headings: the uneven distribution of benefits, the instability of the financial system, the incipient threat of global monopolies and oligopolies, the ambiguous role of the state, and the question of values and social cohesion. The categories are of course somewhat arbitrary, and the various problem areas are interconnected.

1. The benefits of global capitalism are unevenly distributed. Generally speaking, capital is in a much better position than labor, because capital is more mobile. Moreover, financial capital is better situated in the global system than industrial capital; once a plant has been built, moving it is difficult. To be sure, multinational corporations enjoy flexibility in transfer pricing and can exert pressure at the time they make investment decisions, but their flexibility doesn't compare to the freedom of choice enjoyed by international portfolio investors. There is also an advantage in being at the center of the global economy rather than at the periphery. All these factors combine to attract capital to the financial center and account for the ever increasing size and importance of financial markets.

2. Financial markets are inherently unstable, and international financial markets are especially so. International capital

*By focusing on
the problems of global
capitalism I'm not
trying to belittle
the benefits that it
has brought.*

equality of opportunity, and providing a social safety net, particularly in the highly industrialized countries of Europe and North America. But the capacity of the state to look after the welfare of its citizens has been severely impaired by the globalization of the capitalist system, which allows capital to escape taxation

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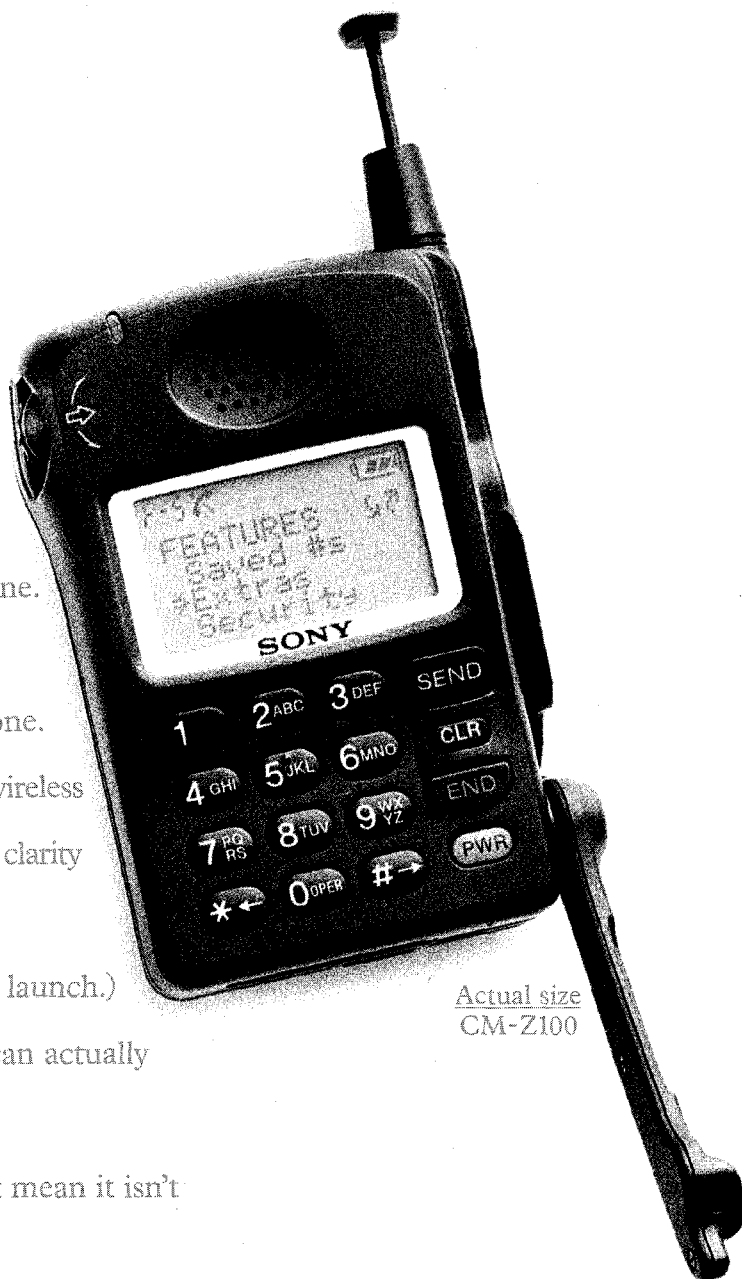
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much more easily than labor can. Capital will tend to avoid countries where employment is heavily taxed or heavily protected, leading to a rise in unemployment. That is what has happened in continental Europe. I am not defending the antiquated European social-security systems, which are badly in need of reform; but I am expressing concern about the reduction in social provisions both in Europe and in America.

This is a relatively new phenomenon, and it has not yet had its full effect. Until recently the state's share of GNP in the industrialized countries taken as a group was increasing; it had almost doubled since the end of the Second World War. Although the ratio peaked in the 1980s, it has not declined perceptibly. The Thatcher and Reagan governments embarked on a program of reducing the state's role in the economy. What has happened instead is that the taxes on capital have come down while the taxes on labor have kept increasing. As the international economist Dani Rodrik has argued, globalization increases the demands on the state to provide social insurance while reducing its ability to do so. This carries the seeds of social conflict. If social services are cut too far while instability is on the rise, popular resentment could lead to a new wave of protectionism both in the United States and in Europe, especially if (or when) the current boom is fol-

alism and fundamentalism on the other.

The state has played another role in economic development: in countries deficient in local capital it has allied itself with local business interests and helped them to accumulate capital. This strategy has proved successful in Japan, Korea, and the now wounded tigers of Southeast Asia. Although the model has worked, it raises some important questions about the relationship between capitalism and democracy. Clearly, an autocratic regime is more favorable to the rapid accumulation of capital than a democratic one, and a prosperous country is more favorable to the development of democratic institutions than a destitute one. So it is reasonable to envisage a pattern of development that goes from autocracy and capital accumulation to prosperity and democracy. But the transition from autocracy to democracy is far from assured: those who are in positions of power cling tenaciously to their power.

Autocratic regimes weaken themselves by restricting free speech and allowing corruption to spread. Eventually they may collapse of their own weight. The moment of truth comes when they fail to sustain prosperity. Unfortunately, economic dislocation and decline do not provide a good environment for the development of democratic institutions. So the political prospects for the Asian economic miracle remain cloudy at best.

5. This brings me to the most nebulous problem area, the question of values and social cohesion. Every society needs some shared values to hold it together. Market values on their own cannot serve that purpose, because they reflect only what one market participant is willing to pay another in a free exchange. Markets reduce everything, including human beings (labor) and nature (land), to commodities. We can have a market economy but we cannot have a market society. In addition to markets, society needs institutions to serve such social goals as political freedom and social justice. There are such institutions in individual countries, but not in the global society. The development of a global society has lagged behind the growth of a global economy. Unless the gap is closed, the global capitalist system will not survive.

When I speak of a global society, I do not mean a global state. States are notoriously imperfect even at the national

level. We need to find new solutions for a novel situation, although this is not the first time that a global capitalist system has come into being. Similar conditions prevailed at the turn of the century. Then the global capitalist system was held together by the imperial powers. Eventually, it was destroyed by a conflict between those powers. But the days of the empires are gone. For the current global capitalist system to survive, it must satisfy the needs and aspirations of its participants.

Our global society contains many different customs, traditions, and religions; where can it find the shared values that would hold it together? I should like to put forward the idea of what I call the open society as a universal principle that recognizes the diversity inherent in our global society, yet provides a conceptual basis for establishing the institutions we need. I realize that gaining acceptance for a universal principle is a tall order, but I cannot see how we can do without it.

WHAT is the open society? Superficially, it is a way to describe the positive aspects of democracy: the greatest degree of freedom compatible with social justice. It is characterized by the rule of law; respect for human rights, minorities, and minority opinions; the division of power; and a market economy. The principles of the open society are admirably put forth in the Declaration of Independence. But the Declaration states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident," whereas the principles of the open society are anything but self-evident; they need to be established by convincing arguments.

There is a strong epistemological argument, elaborated by Karl Popper, in favor of the open society: Our understanding is inherently imperfect; the ultimate truth, the perfect design for society, is beyond our reach. We must therefore content ourselves with the next best thing—a form of social organization that falls short of perfection but holds itself open to improvement. That is the concept of the open society: a society open to improvement. The more conditions are changing—and a global economy fosters change—the more important the concept becomes.

But the idea of the open society is not
(Continued on page 32)

Markets reduce everything to commodities. We can have a market economy but we cannot have a market society.

lowed by a bust of some severity. This could lead to a breakdown in the global capitalist system, just as it did in the 1930s. With the influence of the state declining, there is a greater need for international cooperation. But such cooperation is contrary to the prevailing ideas of laissez-faire on the one hand and nation-

JANUARY
1998



PREVIEW

THEATER

An Opulent
Ragtime Opens
on Broadway

DANCE

*Altogether
Different*
at The Joyce

CLASSICAL

The Gilmore
Award—
Recognizing
Genius

FILM

A Boy's Life
in Pink

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Dance and Theater

BY NANCY DALVA AND JOHN ISEL

AMERICA AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

January is typically a somnambulant month on Broadway. Not this year. Two of the most anticipated musicals of the season will open: *The Capeman*, Paul Simon's long-awaited theater debut (January 8; 212-307-4100), and *Ragtime*, a musical version of E. L. Doctorow's picaresque historical novel (January 18; 212-307-4100).

Ragtime's score, by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens, has been available on CD since the show premiered in Toronto. It's a triumph. The first piano noodlings suddenly give way to tubas, a brass section, fifes, penny whistles, triangles, and cymbals, all



Ragtime music captures the spirit of the age

jostling for attention. What an apt metaphor for the American dream. Thus energized, this classy production, under the director Frank Galati's sure hand, marches bravely into American

history to examine the interlocking fate of blacks and WASPs, immigrants and entertainers. Waves of refugees arrive just in time to stock Henry Ford's new assembly lines, while Harry Houdini and "moving pictures" offer balm for

crushed spirits. In this age of prosperity, *Ragtime* evokes the downside of the Industrial Revolution, stabbing at audiences' serenity before ushering them into the street, humming.

—J.I.

SEVEN COMPANIES UNDER ONE AEGIS

The part of the dance experience we share when we go to the theater is—take your choice—the tip of the iceberg or the frosting on the cake. For a dancer, the day is filled with warming up, class, rehearsal, costume calls, and warming up yet again, with a nibble of this or that and some insider chitchat for sustenance. But for a choreographer, particularly a young one who is still performing, the day is even more daunting. He or she does everything that dancers do and a lot that they aren't trained to do. Willy-nilly, an independent choreographer today is a front person, organizing a company, attracting financial support, juggling production elements and demands, and finding an audience. Sometimes the hardest part—actually making a dance—seems the least of the choreographer's tasks, when in truth it is the *most*, and essential to the art. Since 1991 the Joyce Theater Foundation has supported such artists in a program called *Altogether Dif-*



Kevin O'Day

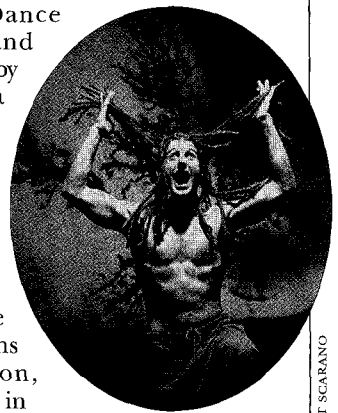
ferent (January 6–25; 212-242-0800), providing behind-the-scenes advice, production support, and audience feedback in an annual program of commissioned work. This year the series presents seven companies, five in their debuts at the theater (known simply as The Joyce, and designed for dancing and seeing dance), one in its world debut. O'Day Dances, with Kevin O'Day the eponymous artistic director and John King the music director, is an eight-dancer ensemble (including the former American Ballet star Johann Renvall and Alexander Kolpin, of the Royal Danish Ballet) that is in effect a mini ballet company. This is something different for *Altogether Different*, and a mark of the crossover now so common between the barefoot and toe-shoed branches on Terpsichore's tree. (O'Day danced, with great distinction, with the headmistress of the mixed form, Twyla Tharp herself.) The rest of the Joyce roster gives New Yorkers a chance to see, over a short time, some companies they have been meaning to catch up with and some they want to see again: Wally Cardona Ensemble, Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, Mark Dendy Dance & Theater, ronald k. brown/evidence, Irène Hultman, and Joy Kellman & Company, performing on a rotating schedule.

—N.D.

TROLL STORY

How does one explain the three major productions on view this month of *Peer Gynt*, Henrik Ibsen's fantastical five-act Norwegian folk-poem? Perhaps *Peer* is the perfect hero for 1990s America: flamboyant and fabulous, saucy and sensual, dangerous and detached. He runs off to cavort with mountain trolls, monkeys, madmen, milkmaids, and millionaires. He returns home only to meet Death in the form of a Button Molder (Edward G. Robinson played the role in the 1923 Theatre Guild production). The sprawling verse play is a theatrical Mount Everest, attracting only intrepid adventurers.

Enter stage left: Trinity Repertory Company, in Providence, Rhode Island (January 30–March 8; 401-351-4242); the National Theatre of the Deaf, touring sixty-three cities through March (860-526-4971, 860-526-4974 TTY); and The Shakespeare Theatre of Washington, D.C. (January 20–March 8; 202-393-2700). Trinity artistic director Oskar Eustis commissioned a new adaptation from David Henry Hwang (*M. Butterfly*) and the acclaimed Swiss director Stephan Müller. Eustis suggests that America is ripe for Mr. Gynt: "Peer shows the consequences of individualism run amok." Meanwhile, the Tony Award-winning National Theatre of the Deaf stages a two-hour *Peer Gynt*, mixing American Sign Language, spoken word, and a visceral physical production co-directed by Robby Barnett, of the Pilobolus Dance Company, and Will Rhys. Darby Jared Leigh, a deaf actor, takes on the title role. Coincidentally, it plays D.C. only ten days after The Shakespeare Theatre opens its production, the first Ibsen in that venerable company's history; Michael Kahn directs and Wallace Acton plays the irrepressible Peer. —J.I.



Darby Jared Leigh as Peer

Nancy Dalva is the author of *Dance Ink: Photographs*.

John Isel is a senior editor at Stagebill.

CATHERINE ASHMORE

BEATRIZ SCHILLER

A VINCENT SCARANO

Classical Music

BY AUSTIN BAER

PRIZEWINNER

Some budding talents thrive in a hothouse atmosphere, but not all. The pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, a master at twenty-seven, grew up unevenly on the rugged western coast of Norway, playing soccer and not practicing all that much. At the comparatively ripe old age of sixteen he entered the conservatory in Bergen, a musically sophisticated city but hardly the big time, where there was quite simply no one in his league. His latest CD, a Schumann album for EMI, shows how beautifully he developed on his own. From the first bars one senses the power not of a personal "style" indiscriminately applied but of a searching imagination excellently served by supple, unimpregnable technique. Kudos to the Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival of Kalamazoo, which has named Andsnes its third "Gilmore Artist," an honor amounting to a quadrennial MacArthur for pianists. Unlike his predecessors, Andsnes quali-



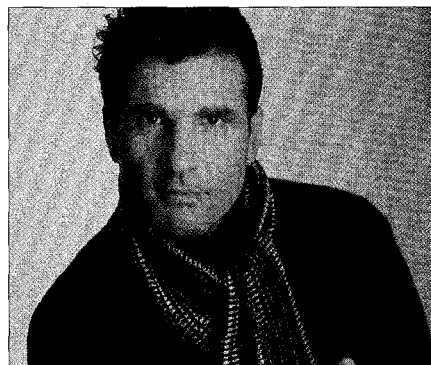
Leif Ove Andsnes at the Gilmore Festival

fies not only as a musicians' musician but as a certifiable star. His prize money, some \$300,000, is likely to pay not for promotion but for such luxuries as commissions of new music or recording projects unencumbered by commercial considerations. (As the co-director of a venturesome summer chamber-music festival in rural Norway, Andsnes is not likely to run short of ideas.) His Gilmore tenure commences on April 25, in a concert that kicks off this year's Gilmore International Keyboard Festival (616-342-1166). This month Andsnes has Beethoven on his mind. With the Los Angeles Philharmonic he plays the Piano Concerto No. 4, the most introspective and poetically mysterious of the five (January 16-18). On January 19 he joins a local chamber ensemble in the Quintet for Piano and Winds, op. 16. (for both programs call 213-380-1171).

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.

THE CAPITAL'S REVIVAL OF THE SONG RECITAL

Good news from inside the Beltway: the renaissance of the vocal recital has spread to Washington. True, the constituency is small, but oh, the trend! The first series by the Vocal Arts Society, in 1991-1992, consisted of three concerts in a hall seating 150. Seven seasons later, twice as many evenings are offered, selling out in a hall twice as large. (The venue is the French Embassy.) According to managers who book their artists with the Vocal Arts Society, the fees are modest, but no one minds. An all-volunteer staff takes not a penny in overhead, and the talent—a bright mixture of top names



Wolfgang Holzmair

and stars-in-waiting—is treated like royalty by an audience of connoisseurs. This month brings the extraordinary David Daniels, who is spearheading the countertenor exodus from the medieval and baroque ghetto (January 13). Next up is Wolfgang Holzmair, from Austria, as gifted an interpreter of Schubert, Schumann, and Wolf as any in the history of recorded sound (March 12). The final guest this season is Olga Makarina, a young Russian who appears under the aegis of the Marilyn Horne Foundation, an institution founded expressly to promote the vocal recital in America. For information call 202-265-8177.

TWO DIVAS IN THE ROLE OF THE COUNTESS

In *Capriccio*, his final opera, Richard Strauss took up a question that has echoed throughout the history of the art form: What comes first, words or music? You don't get one without the other, so why quarrel? But people do, passionately. The plot of *Capriccio* is scarcely more than a pretext for such debate, with a poet and a composer vying for the favor of a lovely countess, the patron who inspires them both. One writes a sonnet, the other sets it to music, and both are left wondering to whom she will give the prize, which is to say herself. In the final scene, an extended monologue, she wonders too, reaching no conclusion. "Is there an ending that isn't banal?" she asks herself, going in to a late, lonely supper. This solo, incorporating the sonnet, ranks with the loveliest scenes Strauss ever wrote for soprano, a voice range he favored above all others. This month Renée Fleming, a diva whose rosy timbre, caressing phrasing, and keen responses to the meaning of the words she sings have audiences and critics in raptures, performs the excerpt with the Chicago Symphony (January 15, 16, 17, 20; 312-294-3000). It should be something special. Her partner is the conductor Christoph Eschenbach, with whom

she has also traversed the sumptuous landscapes of Strauss's Four Last Songs (recorded by BMG Classics). The *Capriccio* Countess is apt to become a signature role for Fleming, as it has long been for Kiri Te Kanawa, another artist of uncommon graciousness, though more placid and less mercurial. Kanawa's well-practiced portrayal is the *raison d'être* of a new production of the opera at the Met this month, the first in the company's history (January 9-31; 212-362-6000).

Renée Fleming



STEFAN FIEDLER

ANDREW ECCLES

1998 4x4 OF THE YEAR

—Petersen's 4-Wheel & Off-Road magazine



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T H E R E ' S O N L Y O N E

Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

A PAIR OF HEARTS

Toward the end of *Oscar and Lucinda* come some ravishing moments in which an exquisite glass church sails down an Australian river and then comes to grief in a spectacular way, embodying all the drama and emotional intensity that's missing from the rest of the film. Although director Gillian Armstrong (*Little Women*, *The Last Days of Chez Nous*) has a fine sense of composition and of period, her adaptation of Peter Carey's Booker Prize-win-



Cate Blanchett and Ralph Fiennes

ning epic novel about two lonely square pegs falling in love in nineteenth-century Australia (the screenplay is by Laura Jones, who scripted Jane Campion's *Portrait of a Lady*) is so sluggishly paced that not even a dash of comedy can save it. Ralph Fiennes plays Oscar, a timid red-head with a calling to the ministry and a bottomless capacity for guilt, along with a gambling habit that endears him to the similarly handicapped Lucinda (newcomer Cate Blanchett, in a jaunty performance strongly reminiscent of Judy Davis's in Armstrong's *My Brilliant Career*), a spirited young heiress and the owner of a Sydney glass factory. Oscar and Lucinda will bet on anything but their love for each other, until finally Oscar, believing his beloved to be enamored of her exiled friend, the Reverend Hasset (Ciaran Hinds), stakes his life on an act that he hopes will prove his devotion. It's a wonderfully romantic story, but the movie's comedy is too labored, its drama too muted, to sustain the viewer's sympathy. Though it's a relief to see Fiennes for once in a role that doesn't require chronic depression, comedy is not his strong suit. Rubbing and wringing his hands and grimacing like a clown in overdrive, Fiennes tries too hard and comes on disconcertingly like a Dickensian caricature, a cross between Bob Cratchit and Uriah Heep.

Ella Taylor is a film critic for LA Weekly.

PORTRAIT OF A GIRL AS A YOUNG BOY

"I don't want to change, but I want them to love me." That's the dilemma of seven-year-old Ludovic (Georges du Fresne) in *Ma Vie en Rose*, a charming yet tough-minded feature debut by Belgian director Alain Berliner which won the hearts of audiences at the 1997 Toronto Film Festival. Though the elfin Ludovic eagerly accepts that he's a girl born into a boy's body, he endures resistance and hostility from almost everyone around him in the prosperous Brussels suburb where he lives. Eventually even his loving parents (Michele Laroque and Jean-Philippe Ecoffey) capitulate and subject their baffled son to a barrage of



Georges du Fresne as Ludovic

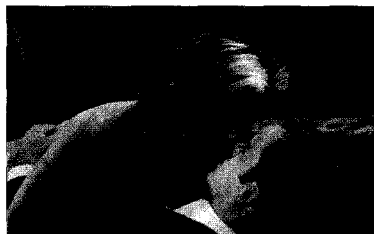
remedies. Nothing works: not therapy, not cropping the boy's hair, certainly not rage. As the family begins to fall apart, Ludovic takes solace in fantasies—san-

tioned by his bohemian grandmother and inspired by a children's television show—that give free rein to his fashion sense and his love for the boy next door. Berliner's deft visual juxtaposition of the bright colors of Ludovic's inner life and the shadowier

hues of the outer world signals an intelligent compassion both for the boy and for his parents, bludgeoned into submission by the smug hypocrisy of a bourgeois community until they find their own solution.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES, LIVES INTERTWINED

In *Afterglow*, a wonderfully dreamy new movie by Alan Rudolph (*Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*), two troubled Montreal couples, each in its way haunted by a



Julie Christie and Jonny Lee Miller

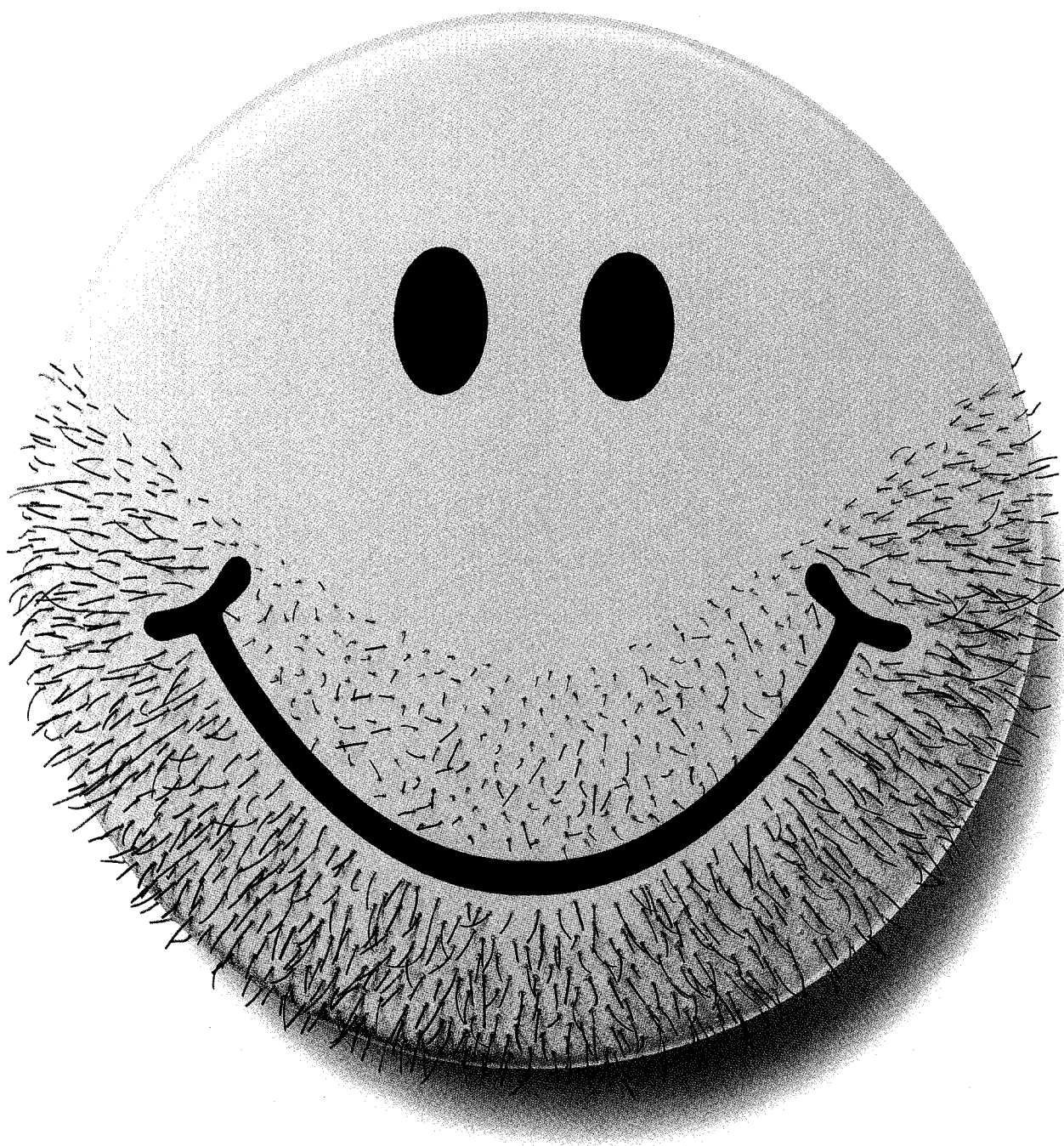
phantom child, each drifting further and further apart, cross paths in a series of coincidences that in any hands but Rudolph's would appear preposterous. Julie Christie makes a vibrant return as Phyllis, a former B-movie actress who now languishes in her bathrobe, watching her old films and tolerating the many affairs of her contractor husband, Lucky (Nick Nolte), whom she has kept at arm's length since they quarreled years ago. When Lucky becomes involved with Marianne (the alabaster Lara Flynn Boyle, doing a splendid imitation of Julie Hagerty), the young wife of an icy corporate climber, Jeffrey (Jonny Lee Miller, unrecognizable from his wild turn as Sick Boy in *Trainspotting*), both couples must

confront the gulfs that threaten to destroy their marriages. Backed by Mark Isham's lovely saxophone score, Rudolph's camera tracks slow minuets around his characters, as if to protect them from their own follies, and as if he, like us, were discovering the story as he went along. Rudolph's spy screenplay undercuts the wistful sorrow of these four wounded souls with often hilarious dialogue, as they talk past one another, and ends on a goofy note of hope.

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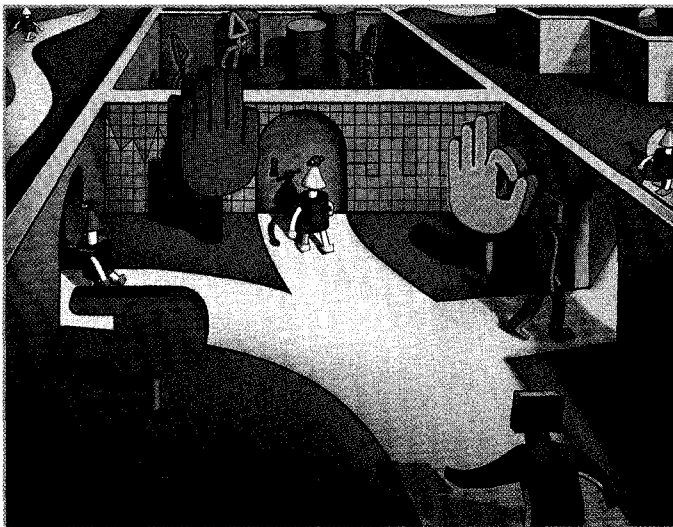
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(Continued from page 24)

widely accepted. On the contrary: the epistemological argument has not even been properly considered, and the idea of a global open society is often explicitly rejected. There are those, for instance, who argue that values are different in Asia. Of course they are different. The global society is characterized by diversity. But fallibility is a universal human condition; once we acknowledge it, we have found a common ground for the open society, which celebrates this diversity.

Recognition of our fallibility is necessary but not sufficient to establish the concept of the open society. We must combine it with some degree of altruism, some concern for our fellow human beings based on the principle of reciprocity.

Any variety of Asian, or other, values would fit into a global open society, provided that some universal values reflecting our fallibility and our concern for others—such as the freedom of expression and the right to a fair trial—were also respected. Western democracy is not the only form that an open society could take. In fact, that the open society should take a variety of forms follows from the epistemological argument. This is both the strength and the weakness of the idea: it provides a conceptual framework that needs to be filled with specific content. Each society, each historical period, must decide on the specifics.



As a conceptual framework, the open society is better than any blueprint, including the concept of perfect competition. Perfect competition presupposes a kind of knowledge that is beyond the reach of market participants. It describes

an ideal world that has little resemblance to reality. Markets do not operate in a vacuum and do not tend toward equilibrium. They operate in a political setting, and they evolve in a reflexive fashion.

The open society is a more comprehensive framework. It recognizes the merits of the market mechanism without idealizing it, but it also recognizes the roles of other than market values in society. At the same time, it is a much vaguer, less determinate concept. It cannot define how the economic, political, social, and other spheres should be separated from and reconciled with one another. Opinions may differ on where the dividing line between competition and cooperation should be drawn. Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek, two champions of the open society, parted company over just this point.

Let me summarize my own views on the specific requirements of our global open society at this moment of history. We have a global economy that suffers from some deficiencies, the most glaring of which are the instability of financial markets, the asymmetry between center and periphery, and the difficulty in taxing capital. Fortunately, we have some international institutions to address these issues, but they will have to be strengthened and perhaps some new ones created. The Basle Committee on Banking Supervision has established capital-adequacy requirements for the international banking system, but these did not prevent the current banking crisis in Southeast Asia. There is no international regulatory authority for financial markets, and there is not enough international cooperation for the taxation of capital.

But the real deficiencies are outside the economic field. The state can no longer play the role it played previously. In many ways that is a blessing, but some of the state's functions remain unfulfilled. We do not have adequate international institutions for the protection of

individual freedoms, human rights, and the environment, or for the promotion of social justice—not to mention the preservation of peace. Most of the institutions we do have are associations of states, and states usually put their own interests ahead of the common interest. The United Nations is constitutionally incapable of fulfilling the promises contained in the preamble of its charter. Moreover, there is no consensus on the need for better international institutions.

What is to be done? We need to establish certain standards of behavior to contain corruption, enforce fair labor practices, and protect human rights. We have hardly begun to consider how to go about it.

As regards security and peace, the liberal democracies of the world ought to take the lead and forge a global network of alliances that could work with or without the United Nations. NATO is a case in point. The primary purpose of these alliances would be to preserve peace; but crisis prevention cannot start early enough. What goes on inside states is of consequence to their neighbors and to the world at large. The promotion of freedom and democracy in and around these alliances ought to become an important policy objective. For instance, a democratic and prosperous Russia would make a greater contribution to peace in the region than would any amount of military spending by NATO. Interfering in other countries' internal affairs is fraught with difficulties—but not interfering can be even more dangerous.

Right now the global capitalist system is vigorously expanding in both scope and intensity. It exerts a tremendous attraction through the benefits it offers and, at the same time, it imposes tremendous penalties on those countries that try to withdraw from it. These conditions will not prevail indefinitely, but while they do, they offer a wonderful opportunity to lay the groundwork for a global open society.

With the passage of time the deficiencies are likely to make their effect felt, and the boom is likely to turn into a bust. But the ever-looming breakdown can be avoided if we recognize the flaws in time. What is imperfect can be improved. For the global capitalist system to survive, it needs a society that is constantly striving to correct its deficiencies: a global open society. ♣

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Changing the World on a Shoestring

An ambitious foundation promotes social change by finding "social entrepreneurs"—people who have new ideas and the knack for implementing them

AN organization called Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, which supports "social entrepreneurs" worldwide, was founded in 1980 by Bill Drayton, an inordinately thin man with a remarkable intellect and tenacity, who has spent the past twenty years on a search across the globe for people capable of bringing about social change in areas of critical human need. Drayton and his staff of forty-five have carried Ashoka, which has headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, to thirty-three countries accounting for three quarters of the population of Central Europe, Latin America, Africa, and South and Southeast Asia, and have assembled a network of thousands of nominators,

by David Bornstein

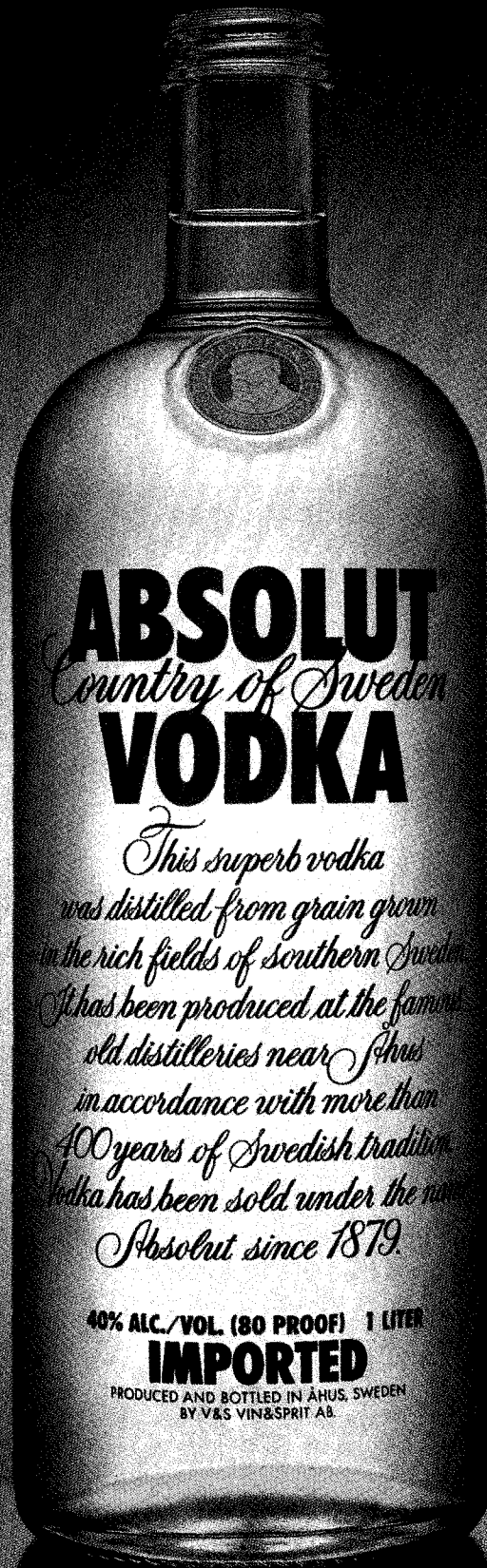
electors, members, fellows, and supporters, who search regularly in their countries for people with fresh ideas and the ability—the vision, drive, savvy, and practical creativity—to make them work on a large scale.

Ashoka defines "large scale" precisely. The organization looks for people who will become references in their field, who will set or change patterns at the national level or, in the case of a small country, at a larger regional level. Ashoka searches for people who, in Drayton's words, will leave their "scratch on history." When the foundation finds a bona fide social entrepreneur, it elects him or her to a fellowship, provides financial and profes-

sional support to help launch the fellow's idea, and connects the fellow with other social entrepreneurs working on similar problems. Like a venture-capital group, Ashoka seeks high yields from modest, well-targeted investments. It seeks returns not in profits but in advances in education, environmental protection, rural development, poverty alleviation, human rights, health care, care for the disabled, care for children at risk, and other fields. Over the past seventeen years Ashoka has screened thousands of candidates and elected about 800 fellows.

At an age when most boys are excited by fast cars, Bill Drayton was excited by organizations. As a high school student at Phillips Academy, Drayton established the Asia Society, which soon became the school's most popular student organization. As an undergraduate at Harvard, he created the Ashoka Table, bringing in prominent government, union, and church leaders for off-the-record dinners at which students could ask "how things really worked." (Ashoka was an Emperor of India in the third century B.C. Stricken with remorse after a conquest, he renounced violence and dedicated the remainder of his life to the public good.)

Ashoka founder Bill Drayton (far right) with fellows, including Gloria de Souza (center) and Fabio Rosa (second from right)



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At Yale Law School, Drayton founded Yale Legislative Services, which at its peak involved a third of the law school's student body. He spent ten years at the consulting firm McKinsey & Company, helping to retool public and private institutions. He led the fight to limit the damage to the Environmental Protection

Drayton served as an assistant administrator of the EPA, where he designed and pushed through an array of market-based approaches to environmental regulation—including tradeable “pollution rights,” today a centerpiece of the Clinton Administration’s plan to curtail greenhouse-gas emissions. “Concepts that Bill was advocating twenty years ago, that were considered radical cave-ins by the environmental movement, are today advocated by nearly everybody as better ways to control pollution,” explains Jodie Bernstein, the director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection, who worked with Drayton at the EPA. “Bill was a very, very significant force in changing the way the government went about carrying out the environmental mission.”

THE idea of creating a fellowship of public innovators had been in the back of Drayton’s mind since his days at Harvard. As he conceived of it, Ashoka would be the most “highly leveraged” approach to change possible, intervening at the “most critical moment in the life cycle” of the “most critical ingredient in the development process.”

In the late 1970s, while he was at the EPA, Drayton and some of his friends began traveling during their Christmas vacations, hunting for nominators and candidates, initially in India, Indonesia, and Venezuela. (To test the idea, Drayton focused on three different-sized countries with dissimilar cultures.) Over a two-week period they would meet sixty or seventy people. “We’d go and see someone for breakfast, two people during the morning, someone for a late lunch, someone for afternoon tea, and then dinner,” he recalls. “We were systematic about it. We would go and see anyone who had a reputation for doing something innovative for the public good. And we kept asking questions: ‘Who in your field, as a private citizen, has caused a major change that you really respond to? How does it work? Is it new? Where do we find this person?’ Then we’d go and see that person and ask the same questions and get more names. We’d turn each name into a three-by-five card, and as the weeks went by, we’d begin to get multiple cards on people. At the end we had mapped out who was doing what in the different fields. We came away thinking, ‘Boy, these people are something,’ and seeing

that it was really the right time to do this.”

Almost all of Ashoka’s work was done by volunteers. Nominators and electors donated their time (they still do). Funding came from friends, private foundations, and Drayton’s pocket. By 1981 Drayton had collected hundreds of three-by-five cards, and Ashoka was ready to hold its first selection panel. One of the first fellows elected was Gloria de Souza, a teacher in Bombay who wanted to redesign elementary school education in India. De Souza felt that the old “Here we go ’round the mulberry bush,” repeat-after-me en masse, rote learning that dominated schools in India deadened the minds of students. She wanted to stimulate independent, creative thought and environmental sensitivity through inquiry and problem-solving. De Souza had demonstrated her ideas on a small scale with great success. She immersed students in their immediate surroundings: she got them thinking about the effects of seasonal cycles by studying plants around the school, about how a gourd could be turned into a musical instrument and why it made the sound it did. She took students on “History Alive” forays to monuments and museums, and explored democracy through school elections. Today such teaching methods are common in schools throughout the industrialized world. However, in India in the 1970s and early 1980s De Souza’s ideas were revolutionary. She was criticized for using her students as guinea pigs, but their reading and math scores soared.

In order to disseminate her approach, De Souza had to leave her teaching position and devote herself to the task full-time. Ashoka granted her a four-year living stipend, an investment of about \$10,000. In 1985 the city of Bombay invited De Souza to introduce her Environmental Studies (EVS) approach in its school system through a pilot program. By 1988 almost a million students were being taught with her methods, and the government of India had incorporated EVS into its new national curriculum.

After the 1980 presidential election Drayton had gone back part-time to McKinsey & Company, where he had worked in the 1970s, and continued building Ashoka, taking frequent trips to Asia. For five years he was unable to persuade any major foundation to sup-

*Drayton looks like a
mild-mannered
intellectual. His voice
is barely audible.
This is misleading.*



Agency after the election of Ronald Reagan as President. Drayton has been the chairman, the president, a trustee, or a member of twenty-one associations.

Drayton looks like the mildest-mannered of intellectuals. He wears thick glasses and old blue suits, and skinny ties with skinny stripes. His shirt pocket is usually stuffed with four or five pens, dozens of notes, and a comb (which he employs, not very successfully, to restrain the lank strands of hair that persist in flopping over his glasses). He speaks at a barely audible level, having grown up in a family in which raising one’s voice was considered uncivilized.

All this is very misleading. Ted Marmor, a professor of public policy at the Yale School of Management, and a friend of Drayton’s, told me recently how a colleague had described Drayton years before Marmor met him: “‘You’ve never seen anything like this fellow. It looks like a heavy wind would get rid of him—but he’s got the determination of Job and the brains of a Nobel laureate.’” Marmor added his own assessment: “This wispy, carefully controlled, blue-suited fellow has got enormous power. And connected to it is a shrewdness about the way institutions operate and the world really works.”

During the Carter Administration,

port Ashoka. Potential donors' eyes glazed over when he spoke of "investments" in social entrepreneurs or used the analogy of "social venture capital."

One afternoon in late 1984 he received a telephone call informing him that he had won a MacArthur fellowship, worth more than \$200,000 over five years. Drayton left McKinsey to work full-time on Ashoka, and in half a dozen years raised millions of dollars from private donors and foundations, including the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the MacArthur Foundation. By 1990 Ashoka had opened offices in Bangladesh, Brazil, Great Britain, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, the United States, and Zimbabwe. In 1994 and 1995 Ashoka opened offices throughout South America, the Caribbean Basin, and Central Europe. The organization is currently considering launching a program to elect fellows in the United States.

Ashoka is working against the backdrop of a major global development: the emergence of an international "citizens' sector." Over the past few decades, as many individuals have sought to address pervasive social problems in new ways, there has been a proliferation of not-for-profit organizations—or what are referred to in development circles as nongovernmental organizations—throughout the world. Peter Drucker, the renowned management expert, estimates that 800,000 nonprofits have been established over the past thirty years. Drucker sees management and innovation in this sector as one of the vital challenges of our era. He helped establish a foundation for nonprofit management in 1990. In recent years the Stanford Business School, the Harvard Business School, and the John F. Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard, have established programs in social entrepreneurship and not-for-profit management.

Drayton is optimistic about this trend. "We're in this wonderfully creative period where it is the time to build the intelligent institutions that will support a competitive social half of society. To my mind, the single major evolutionary

task that our generation faces is developing the democratic revolution's institutions beyond business in the social arena. And people are getting the idea that they can have a career doing this."

WHEN Drayton calls someone a "social entrepreneur," he is describing a specific and rare personality type—someone, in fact, like himself. He doesn't mean a businessman who gives jobs to homeless people or devotes a share of profits to, say, the environmental movement. Ashoka's social entrepreneur is a pathbreaker with a powerful new idea, who combines visionary and real-world problem-solving creativity, who has a strong ethical fiber, and who is "totally possessed" by his or her vision for change.

"Entrepreneurs, for some reason deep



in their personality, know from the time they are little that they are in this world to change it in a fundamental way," Drayton says. Unlike artists or scholars, entrepreneurs are not satisfied with merely expressing an idea. Unlike managers or social workers, they are not satisfied with solving the problem of a particular group of people. To be effective, they must remain open to signals from the environment. They do not fare well in academia, because they have no interest in specializing.

And entrepreneurs are emphatically not idealists. Drayton says, "Idealists can tell you what Xanadu is going to look like—many pleasure domes, et cetera, et cetera—but they can't tell you how the sewage is going to work in Xanadu once you get there, and they certainly can't tell you how you're going to get there." In contrast, social entrepreneurs are obsessed with the details of implementation. Early in life they engage in self-designed apprenticeships to prepare themselves for the challenges ahead.

Social entrepreneurs share a deep belief in their ability to alter their society fundamentally. "These people feel so strongly that they can make a difference," Susan Stevenson, who heads Ashoka's venture program, explains, "that when any problem confronts them, they're immediately thinking, 'What can I do right here and now where I sit to help solve this?'"

To get a clear idea of what Ashoka means by social entrepreneurs, we can think of a few noted figures who fit the bill. Susan B. Anthony, Margaret Sanger, Clara Barton, Horace Mann, Dorothea Dix, Jane Addams, and Ralph Nader are good examples. Florence Nightingale was one of the greatest social entrepreneurs in modern history.

Nightingale's fame grew out of her compassionate care for British soldiers in Turkey during the Crimean War. The hygienic standards she introduced reduced the death rate in British military hospitals in Scutari from 42 to two percent. After her return to England she fought for the rest of her life to professionalize the field of nursing. She established standards for sanitation; introduced such innovations in hospitals as patient call lights, dumbwaiters, and hot and cold running water on every floor; and systematized the training of nurses. (She also invented the pie chart.) She wrote 150 books and monographs and 12,000 letters. Through relentless lobbying efforts and the skillful use of influential contacts she got her ideas adopted first by the British Army and eventually by the medical establishment.

How would one systematically screen a large number of candidates to find po-

tential Florence Nightingales? Ashoka's selection process focuses on four criteria: creativity, entrepreneurial quality, the social impact of the person's idea, and ethical fiber. Candidates must undergo several screening steps: nomination, reference checks, site visits and interviews by an Ashoka in-country representative, a second-opinion review, and a string of interviews conducted by a "selection panel," consisting of three or four social entrepreneurs from the candidate's country and an Ashoka board or senior staff member who lives on another continent. Each panelist interviews each candidate one-on-one. When they come together as a jury, the selection panelists focus on one fundamental question: Do we believe that this person with this idea will change the pattern in this field, at the national level or beyond? Decisions to elect fellows must be unanimous. Ashoka holds a selection panel at least once a year for every country in which it operates. A final hurdle—approval by Ashoka's board—ensures consistency for selection worldwide.

Ashoka passes over many candidates engaged in valuable work at the local level. Drayton sees Ashoka as the first professional association for social entrepreneurs, with an important role in defining a new field—a new career path. "In these early decades of the profession it's especially important that we get it right," he says. "People understand this field by anecdote rather than theory, so a fellow we decide to elect becomes a walking anecdote of what we mean by a social entrepreneur."

CONSIDER Fabio Rosa, an agronomist and an engineer whose driving ambition is to bring electricity to tens of millions of poor people in Brazil. Rosa and I met recently in Rio de Janeiro. He is an energetic man with a sharp, direct manner and a disarming sense of humor. I liked him immediately, and he made my job easy. When I asked him a question about rural electrification, he talked with focus and enthusiasm for forty-five minutes. His grasp of detail was remarkable: he spoke knowledgeably about electrical engineering, irrigation, rice farming, land grazing, solar power, banking, politics—all fields he needed to understand in order to work effectively. "I am the low-cost-electricity champion in Brazil," Rosa

said, and he wasn't being immodest, merely straightforward. Rosa understands the scope of his vision, and he seems to have little doubt that he can carry it out. He has been at it for fifteen years—and he feels he is off to a good start.

In the early 1980s Rosa accepted a post as secretary of agriculture in a small, isolated municipality called Palmares, in Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul. Palmares was a depressed area with poor infrastructure and a local population dependent on rice farming. Shortly after his arrival Rosa took a tour of the area to get to know local farmers. He quickly discovered that they had a big problem: water. Poor farmers had to buy water at exploitative prices from wealthy landowners. "Without water there was no production," Rosa said. "And without production there was no wealth. The whole political situation was determined by this fact."

He began thinking of ways to help the farmers. Watching television news one evening, he saw an interview with Ennio Amaral, a professor at a technical school who had developed an inexpensive rural-electrification system in a nearby district. Rio Grande do Sul has a high water table. With cheap electricity, Rosa thought, even poor farmers could drop wells and irrigate their land. "Then they would be free from the tyranny of water."

Three quarters of the rural population in Palmares had no access to electricity, because Brazil's electrification standards had been designed on a huge scale under a military regime to serve cities, large farms, and industry. The cost of providing electricity to a single rural property was estimated at \$7,000—triple the annual per capita income.

Rosa paid Amaral a visit and was impressed by the simplicity of his system. To cut costs, Amaral substituted wood for cement poles, steel for copper wire, and steel-and-zinc conductors for aluminum ones. He spaced poles far apart and used small transformers.

Amaral had been developing his system for ten years but had not managed to extend it beyond a test site. "He kept running into what you might call a 'small-big' problem," Rosa said. "What he had invented worked beautifully, but it was illegal." In Brazil state electric companies determine and supervise technical standards. "If a system doesn't

meet the 'norm,' the company won't turn the electricity on." At the time, the state electric company in Rio Grande do Sul saw no reason to change the norm. Rosa disagreed.

He got authorization from the governor to conduct an experiment with Amaral's system, figuring that local people could handle a good part of the construc-

*Rosa told villagers
that his plan could provide a household with
electricity for about the
price of a cow.*



tion. They could make use of existing poles and trees, and string most of the wire themselves. Rosa explained his idea to local people, who volunteered their labor to keep costs down.

He spent a year developing a project proposal and persuaded the director of the Brazilian National Social Development Bank to finance it. By working with journalists and local government officials, he was able to overcome opposition from the cement cartel and the aluminum industry.

As a selling point, Rosa had told villagers that his plan could provide a household with electricity for about the price of a cow. Two years later, in 1988, he delivered on his promise: 400 rural families were hooked up to the electricity grid at a cost of \$400 to \$600 per family—less than 10 percent of the government's figure of \$7,000. Three quarters of the farmers bought water pumps; 80 percent bought refrigerators or television sets. Farm incomes increased. For every three people served by electricity, Rosa reported, one family member returned from the favelas (urban slums)—a striking development in a country that has gone in fifty years from being 70 percent rural to being more than 70 percent urban.

Rosa fought with electric-company

technicians for a year until his standard was approved. By then his term of office had expired. "It became clear to me that I needed to be independent," he told me.

At this point a local nominator brought Rosa to Ashoka's attention. With Ashoka's support—a living stipend for three years—he continued to develop his system. After a year and a half a helicopter arrived at his house carrying a minister from the state government. The director of the national development bank had promised \$2.5 million in low-cost loans to the state to spread the Palmares Project—and he wanted Rosa to oversee it.

Over the next three years Rosa implemented Project Light, carrying electricity to 25,000 low-income people in forty-two municipalities. Working in areas of different topography, among corn, soybean, and milk farmers, Rosa demonstrated the widespread applicability of the Palmares Project. In 1991 the University of São Paulo established a national resource center for low-cost electrification based on Rosa's system. In 1996 the state of Rio Grande do Sul launched Project Light II, a \$34 million plan, based on Rosa's technical standard, to carry electricity to 160,000 people. Later that year the government of São Paulo State, Brazil's most populous state, launched a \$240 million rural-electrification project to provide electricity to 800,000 people, which Rosa is coordinating on a half-time basis. (He now spends half of his time developing rural solar-energy systems in other states.)

"What São Paulo does, the rest of Brazil copies," Rosa told me. "Once we consolidate the project in São Paulo, I think the rest of Brazil will just be a matter of time."

Ashoka's total investment in Rosa came to less than \$25,000. When I asked him if he would have succeeded without Ashoka's support, he replied, "Yes, but it would have taken longer." He added, "Ashoka let me work the way I wanted to work. Bill made me see that I was a social entrepreneur. He showed me that my role was to take things beyond theory and find practical solutions for all the problems that emerged along the way."

AFTER seventeen years Ashoka has achieved an international network of fellows in various fields: 180 working on education and children's issues, 147

working on the environment, 104 on income generation and poverty alleviation, 101 on women's issues, and fifty-three on disability.

Some patterns have emerged. For example, in many parts of the developing world a disability—mental illness, deafness, paraplegia—is seen as a curse or punishment from God. The disabled person is hidden in a back room, and the family is stigmatized. To get a sense of the scope of this problem, take the example of mental illness. India has a population of nearly a billion but only 6,000 trained psychiatrists and psychologists. "You have a European-North American model that is incredibly expensive and almost irrelevant for most of the world," Bill Drayton says. "You can't just rail and say, 'Well, India should have a million psychiatrists.' That's not going to happen." Social entrepreneurs working separately in India, Brazil, Mexico, and elsewhere have developed similar strategies: low-cost family, peer-to-peer, and community-based treatment models that draw heavily on existing social and cultural strengths. "In each case they find that something other than professional staffing is required to solve the problem on any significant scale," Drayton says.

Ashoka's largest "mosaic" incorporates the experiences of 180 fellows working in education and with impoverished, neglected, and abused children around the world. Here Ashoka has identified a clear pattern. In an effort to help children, the group that fellows most often turn to for assistance is the children themselves. "In fellow after fellow you see new ideas of how you can put children in charge of a series of activities, and how empowering them has a strong impact on their academic performance and their motivation," Valdemar de Oliveira Neto, the head of Ashoka's global fellowship program, explains.

Drayton has recently imported that principle to the United States in a new organization called Youth Venture—a support network for young people who want to launch their own organizations, or ventures, to change their schools or communities. "We will turn this thing into the twenty-first-century alternative to the scouting movement," he says, with the characteristic confidence and boldness of the entrepreneur. ☸

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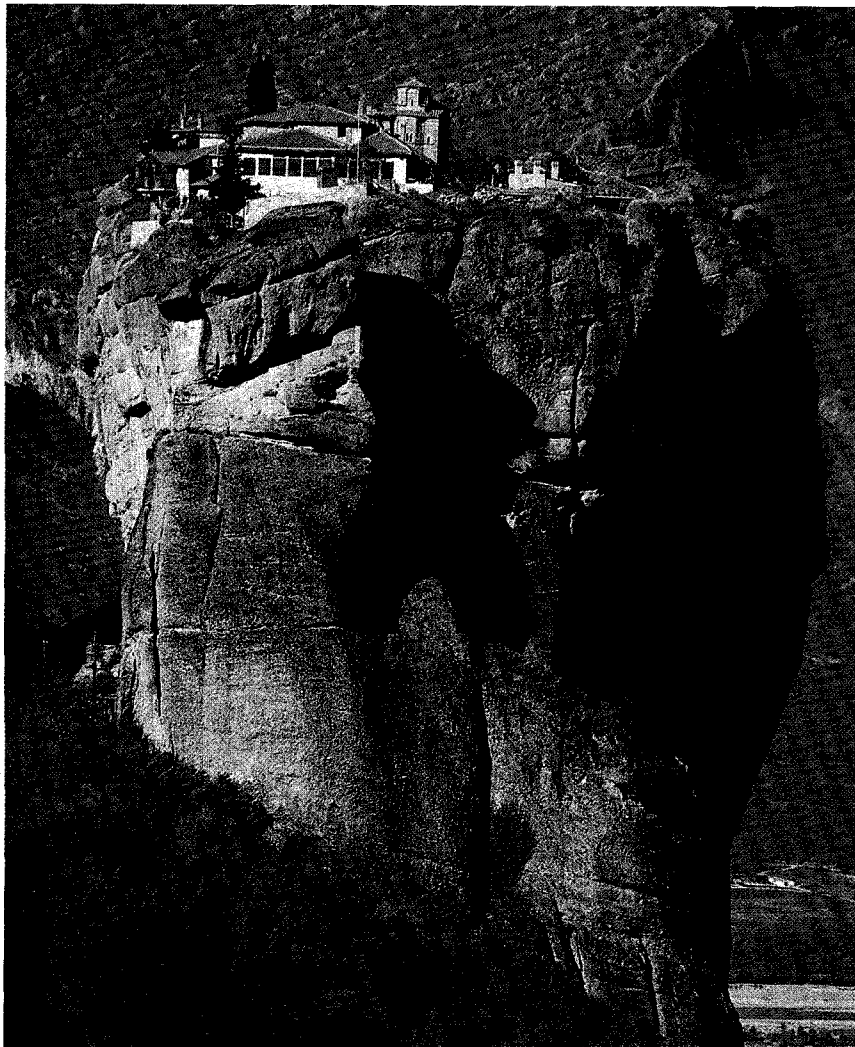
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A Greece to Be Discovered

Not far from the tourist-trammeled ruins of antiquity are monasteries in the sky, pirate coasts, and friendly islands

FEW places on earth rival Greece when it comes to numbers of historic sites—or tourists. Often travelers arriving with lofty expectations of Mediterranean ease and Hellenic splendor depart complaining of indifferent service and of hordes of package-tour vacationers traipsing dusty cir-

by Jeffrey Tayler

cles around the ruins, bumping into one another and excusing themselves in a babble of French, German, and English. This disappointment may be traced in part to the crowd-drawing grandeur of Greece's ancient past and its marbled legacy of temples and agoras, and in part to the much-advertised beach-

es and nightlife of the islands, which in the summer months seem to attract half of northern Europe. As a result, the Greece of rugged mountains, solitary islands, and regal hosts—though in fact nearby—can feel as remote as Homer's Troy or as mythical as Atlantis.

Much of the less-trammeled Greece belongs to an era many Westerners know little about: the post-Hellenic Byzantine and Ottoman centuries that gave birth to what has come to be known in Modern Greek as *Romiosyne* (from reference to Constantinople, the Byzantine Empire's capital, as "the second Rome"). This "Romaic" Greece is historically Orthodox Christian, not pagan, with a heritage of monasteries and barrel-roofed churches, black-garbed widows, a lamb-and-pita cuisine savoring of the Middle East, and a language rich in Turkish and Italian borrowings. Because the Romaic aspect of Greek history is less celebrated than the legacy of the ancients, Romaic sights draw fewer visitors, and the people living near them tend to be unjaded, and even disarmingly hospitable.

When the classical Greece of Athens and the Peloponnese declined, power shifted away from the south and finally found its locus in Constantinople, now Istanbul. Many Romaic sights, therefore, including the cloud-encircled Meteora monasteries, are located in the north of the country. Others dot the peripheries—the hauntingly desolate Mani peninsula, once the domain of pirates, was, until the digging of the Corinth canal, the southernmost point of mainland Europe. *Romiosyne's* culture lives on as well, and often does so within a short ferry hop from Aegean tourist meccas—the Isle of Folegandros, for example, has determinedly preserved its time-honored feasting traditions.

Visits to the Romaic enclaves described below may be the focus of a tour or be combined with travels elsewhere in the Hellenic peninsula. Almost nowhere in Greece is truly remote—the country is relatively small, about the size of Alabama, and well-established bus and ferry networks cover all destinations. Away

Meteora's Monastery of the Holy Trinity, above, remains active

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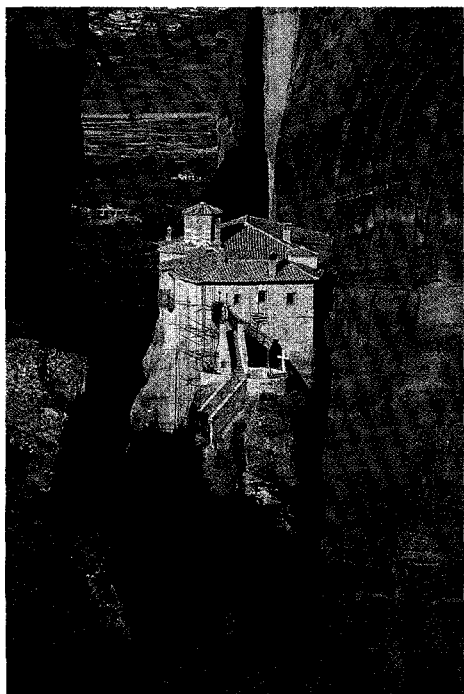
the fiercest automatic sedan in the world (heh, heh, heh).

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from resort areas expect accommodations to be basic but clean. Off-season \$50 a day per person will suffice for meals and comfortable lodging in family-run hotels (in-season costs are about 20 percent more). In the smaller towns



and villages well-maintained private rooms with bath may be found through local cafés, or by following the ROOMS signs that are often posted on the central square. For maps, prices, and detailed descriptions of what you will encounter off the beaten track, I would recommend *Greece—The Rough Guide* or the Lonely Planet guide. You may also wish to be in touch with the Greek National Tourist Organization, in New York, to obtain illustrated brochures and more information: the number is 212-421-5777.

IN the central region of Thessaly, about a five-hour drive northwest of Athens, rise the aptly named Meteora—slate-gray cones and buttelike outcroppings reaching as high as 2,000 feet. They appear in their crookedness to be staggering, as if fatigued from surviving eons of tectonic tumult. The rocks themselves might merit a visit for their curiosity value, but the Byzantine monasteries that top them have made them one of Romaic Greece's most spectacular sights. Though monks seeking respite from temporal woes began establishing themselves in sketes, or retreats, on lesser peaks in the tenth century, legend has it that the first anchorite to

reach the highest summit—that of the Great Meteoron—to found a proper monastery did so on the back of an eagle in 1340. Within 200 years twenty-four idiorrhymic, or self-governing, monasteries crowned the Meteora. By that time all of the Byzantine Empire had fallen to the Turks, but in keeping with Islamic tolerance of monotheistic faiths, the sultans permitted these religious communities to thrive. Today six monasteries (including two convents) are still functioning and may be visited, using either the town of Kalambaka or the village of Kastraki as a base. I found the two described below the most impressive.

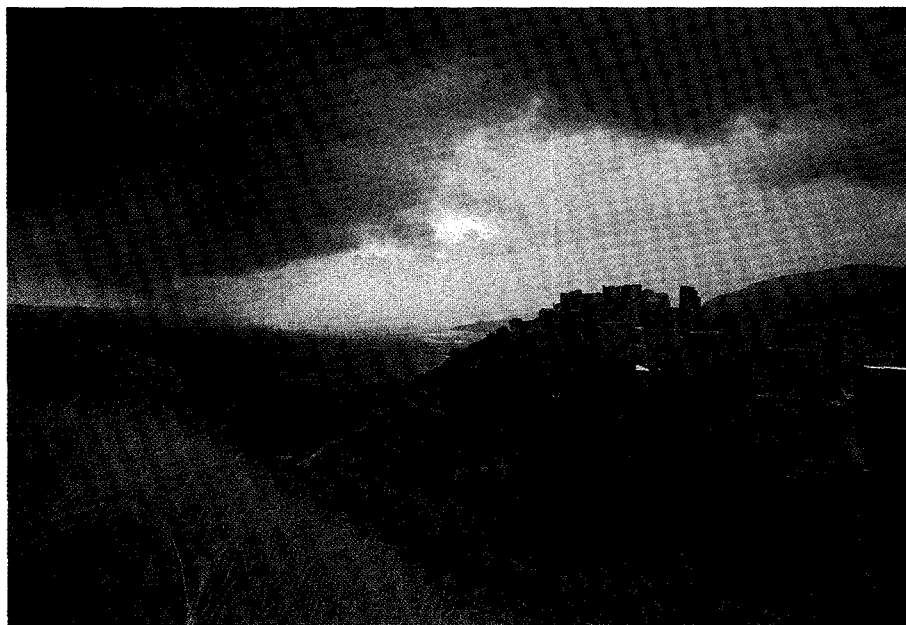
Although a paved road dips, rises, and loops its way amid the rocks, to taste their renowned solitude I decided to hike the three-mile trail from Kastraki to the Great Meteoron. After passing the Monastery of Saint Nikolaos, the path wended upward into the brush-cluttered crevasse between the Great Meteoron and the rock of Saint Varlaam's Monastery. Wisps of morning mist drifted about the chasm walls, which billowed skyward, convex and lichen-mottled; ravens croaked and falcons screeched as they flitted across the divide above. I sensed the almost empyrean isolation afforded by the rocks, the spiritual treasure sought by the monks.

A half hour later I stood breathless in the loggia of the Monastery of the Great Meteoron (a steep stone staircase now leads from the base of the rock to the top, obviating the dubious rope-and-pulley windlass by which monks, dangling over

the chasm, were formerly lifted aboard). Several Montenegrin pilgrims joined me, and we entered the adjacent church together. Fearful of disturbing them, I took a seat in one of the oaken miserere-stalls in the back while they walked to the head of the katholikon, which glowed with the halos of saints on Byzantine frescoes. From the cupola's ceiling a gilt Pankrator (Christ the Almighty) stared down. Crossing themselves, the pilgrims kissed the three icons beneath the iconostasis. Then they lit tapers for loved ones lost and said a prayer, and we all walked out. After this we visited the charnel house—a dim vault containing the bones of monks who had served in the Great Meteoron—and the ancient, soot-blackened kitchen as well. The pilgrims' awe before their Orthodox relics rubbed off on me, and we wandered around the monastery for an hour uttering not a word.

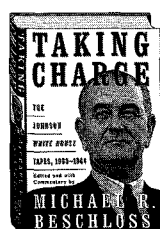
The Convent of Saint Varvara Roussanou (on a lower spindle of rock across the valley from Saint Varlaam's) possesses frescoes of martyrdom that deserve special attention. A peaceable sister there leads visitors into the narthex beside the chapel and leaves them before ceiling-high depictions of Christians suffering death by caning, quartering, stone-crushing, horse-dragging, throat-slitting, and burning. What stands out particularly, however, is the decapitations, which are shown effected by saws, swords, dag-

Above left, the Convent of Saint Varvara Roussanou; below, Vathia, on the Mani peninsula

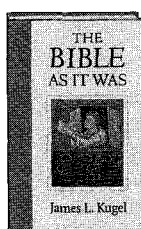


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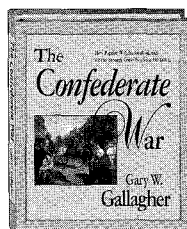
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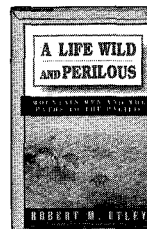
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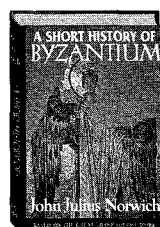
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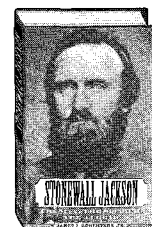
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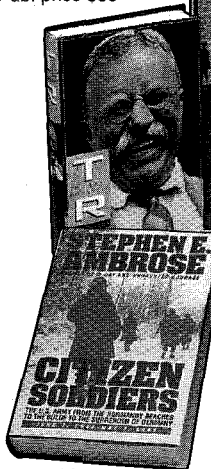


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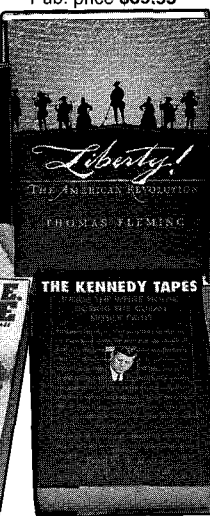


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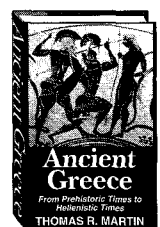
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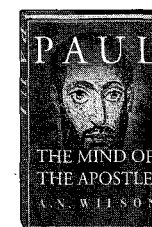
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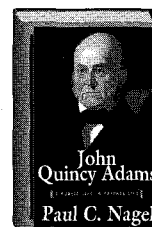
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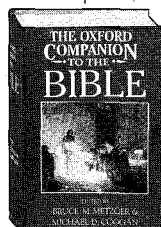
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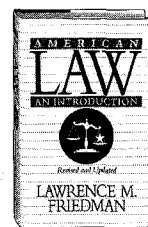
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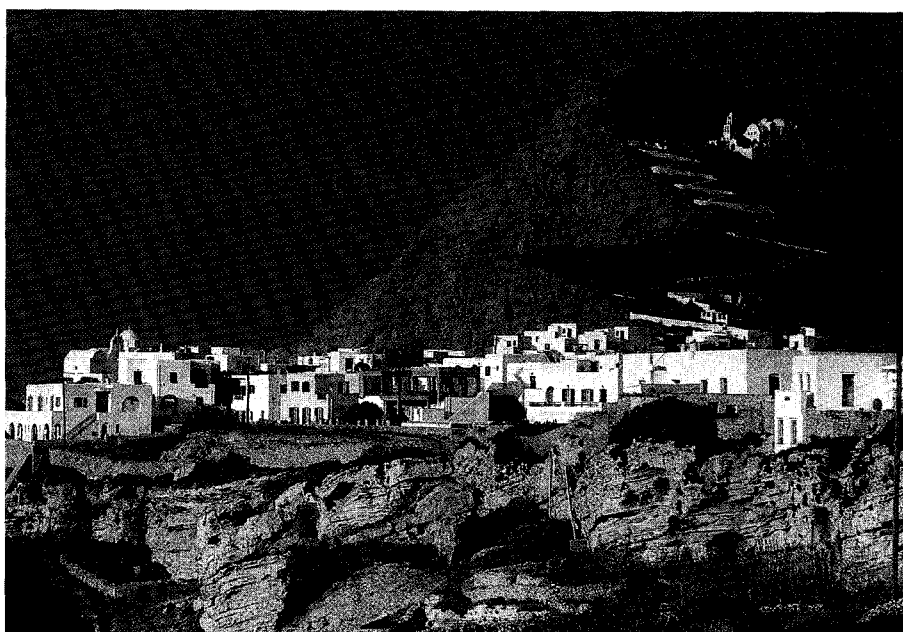
gers, and axes, with each martyr's gold-nimbused head rolling away from its neck stump, its face serene with the surety of coming beatitude. One can imagine the nuns of the past contemplating the gore and finding it perfectly mundane; in the village below, the Ottomans meted out similar punishments to Greeks fighting for the glory and freedom of Romiosyne.

The monasteries of Meteora constitute some of the greatest attractions of Romiosyne, but keep in mind that they are functioning places of worship and dress accordingly: women should wear long skirts, men long pants, and both sexes should cover their arms at least to the elbows. It is best to visit in the morning, when you may be nearly alone; in the afternoon buses filled with Orthodox pilgrims from the Slavic countries to the north come rolling in.

FAR to the south of Meteora, and seemingly worlds away from fertile Thessaly, lies an arid, windswept finger of land that only in the nineteenth century emerged from the Middle Ages: the peninsula of Mani, in the Peloponnese. With its jagged mountains, chasms



choked with thorn and cactus, and fierce-browed people, Mani little resembles the rest of mainland Greece. There is reason for this: Maniots are descended not from the renowned Hellenes but from their rivals, the grim and martial Spartans.



Above, Kheria; below left, Byzantine frescoes and native plants, and right, Nikos's family's tower, all in Kheria

When Greek territory began suffering barbarian incursions in the third century, some Spartans fled to the stony fastnesses of the peninsula to the south, and there they remained, isolated and determined to fend off intruders. Today it is a point of pride with Maniots to deny that their land ever fell to the Turks (Maniot lords kept their autonomy in return for paying tribute to Ottoman authorities), and many enjoy miming, with florid thrusts and handchops, the butchering their ancestors wrought on the sultans' troops during attempted invasions.

The first paved road was laid only in the 1970s. If, since then, Mani has gradually opened up to the world, its architecture, shot through with the spirit of the vendetta, still bespeaks the traditions of medievalism. Tumbledown and sibilant with Aegean winds, outfitted with windows scarcely wider than a rifle barrel, sentrylike stone towers unique to Mani dominate villages at the roadside and beyond. These towers served as fortifications, and from them families engaged in feuds that often lasted generations.

High above the harbor of Yerolimain, in the village of Kheria, I listened to Nikos, a Mani native in his late twenties, talk of his people's past penchant for revenge. We were standing, appropriately, on the lookout platform of his family's 300-year-old tower.

"My grandfather killed a man, and a feud began, and the families took to their towers," Nikos said. "He had to flee—he made it to Smyrna, where he lived for thirty years. He married there, but finally

came back to Mani when things settled."

Later we sat down to a lunch of lamb, fresh feta, and lentil soup in the rose-lined stone sanctuary of the courtyard below.

"Of course, we Maniots never killed women in our feuds," Nikos said. "Only sons. The idea was to kill off as many sons as possible. But really, the lack of farmland motivated the feuding. Mani's soil is so dry and rocky that it was tough to find plots to grow food on."

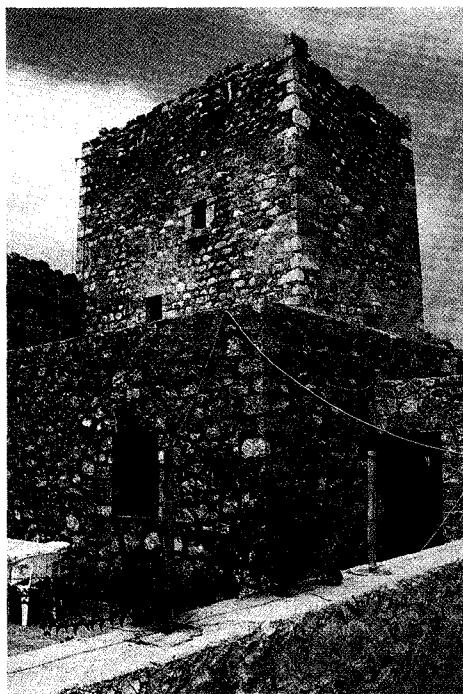
Soon Nikos was holding forth on the sources of regional pride and identity: the pure Greek blood of the Maniots, their devotion to the Orthodox faith, and their boundless hospitality to foreigners (in whose numbers he included non-Maniot Greeks). Even Mani's tomatoes, he said, were special, since no pollutants sullied the soil in which they grew. When I remarked that I had seen surprisingly little fish on the restaurant menus of Yerolimain, he laughed and said with a winking hint of disdain, "We Maniots were pirates, not fishermen! What fish we ate we stole from others."

Mani is ideal for those seeking the brooding silence of the towers and former pirate coasts. The castlelike village of Vathia, perched on a crag high above the sea, makes a good place to start to savor both. In addition, Byzantine churches, many of which I was unable to find so much as mentioned in guidebooks, dot the

rocky slopes of the Saggias and Taiyettos Mountains, the geological spines of the peninsula. Visitors can hike about and make their own discoveries—a rare treat in a country so canvassed and excavated.

THE Isles of Greece! The Isles of Greece!" Byron wrote, apparently certain that this simple exclamatory lead would draw readers into Canto Three of *Don Juan*. Pentametered by Homer, lyricized by Sappho, promoted by travel agencies the world over, the approximately 1,400 islands bejeweling Greece's seas compose an airy haven of rock, sunlight, warm tides, and, unfortunately, crowds of tourists that in high season can easily outnumber the locals. Yet Folegandros, in the Cyclades, thanks to its size, has avoided commercialization and retained its own traditions. Between its two main villages, Khora and Ano Meria, it has only 650 people, and should you arrive on Folegandros during a festival, you can expect to be invited to join in the fête. Daily ferries to the island from Piraeus take about nine hours, but it can be reached in about two from nearby Santorini or Ios.

I traveled to Folegandros for peace and quiet, but as my ferry drew into the



tiny port of Karavostassi, I heard gunfire. "It's Easter week," the woman next to me on deck explained. "Happy Easter!" Indeed.

For this one week, she told me, the local people dispense with the serenity

that characterizes their lives and participate in rites whose booms and bangs reach every corner of their island.

On Easter Sunday in Khora I found myself the guest of Stratos, a hotelier, and his Polish wife, Anna. In front of us a goat roasted on a spit over a pit of coals. The entire village was buzzing with preparations for the feast, the grandest of the Orthodox calendar, but Stratos's other guest, Achilles, an aged, three-toothed peddler of eggs, had begun honoring the occasion earlier than most with copious paschal doses of ouzo. An hour later we moved to the wooden table in the courtyard and piled our plates high with slabs of roast goat. Achilles gummied a toast to the beauty of Polish women, Stratos topped off my glass with pine-resin retsina wine, and we dug in.

After lunch the priest, a plump figure of pomp in black raiments, accompanied by two aides shouldering the village icon, a sonorous chanter of litanies swinging a thurible, and a coterie of notables, emerged from the church on the mount above Khora to make rounds administering the annual blessing on each household. I followed the procession down into the village's alleys, which were freshly whitewashed and scattered with purple judas blossoms. As the entourage approached a doorway, the youths of the house raced to the roof, raised shotguns, and fired salvos into the sky. The crowd expanded, and as each house irrigated the guests with raki, the revelers grew more and more (religiously) boisterous. This was vintage Romiosyne—shotgun blasts signaling a defiant zest for life, the scent of gunpowder mingling with incense and the aroma of flowers.

"*Khristos anesti ek nekron*" ("Christ is risen from the dead"), the chanter intoned in a bass voice as the procession moved along. That evening villagers turned out for the paseo in their Sunday best, and the air rang with "*Khristos anesti!*"

At every turn I was invited into houses by proud hosts who had laid out pies, nuts, and sweetmeats, and bottles of raki. The feasting lasted all day and late into the night, as did the shotgun fire. Still flushed with holiday cheer, I left Folegandros a few days later feeling resurrected myself. That feeling is the principal joy of discovering Romaic Greece, a Greece that lives on and renews itself still in the long shadow of its classical past. ☛

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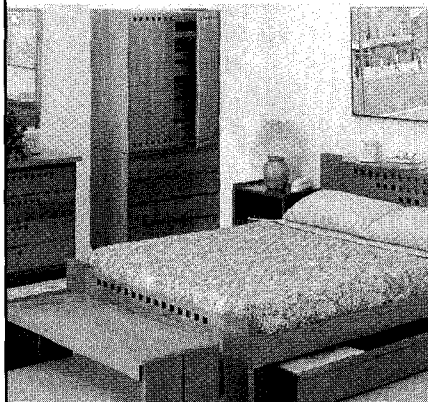
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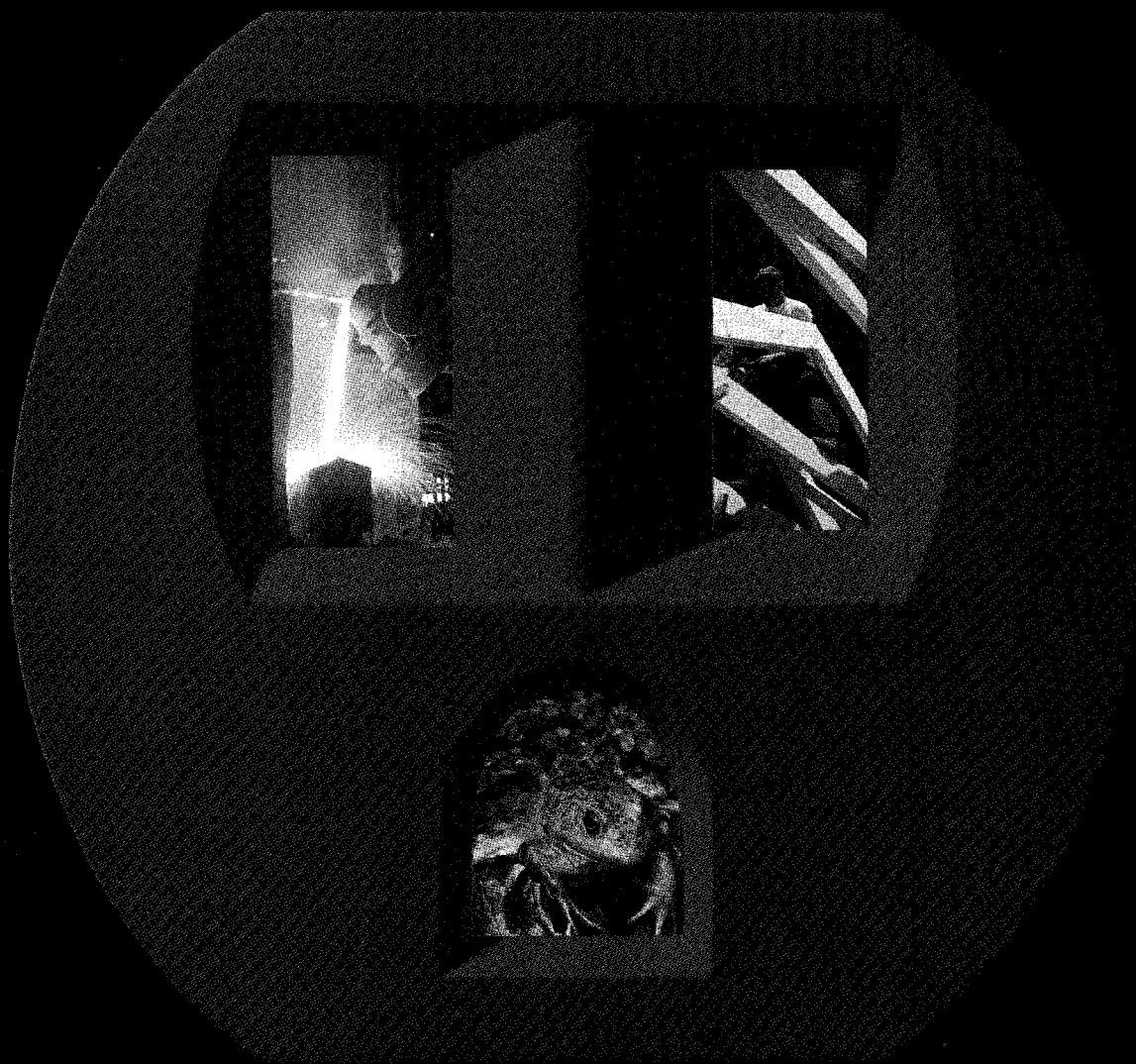
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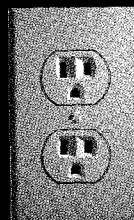
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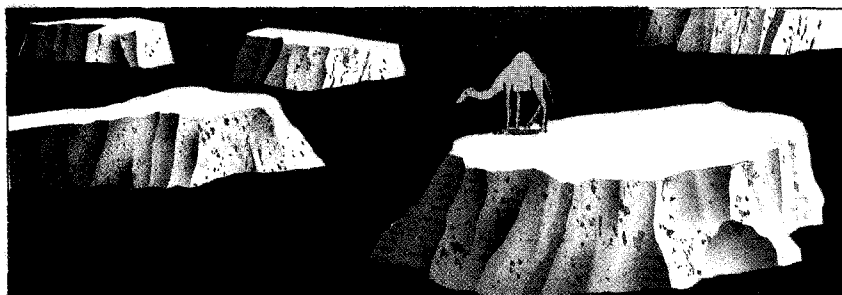
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The Great Climate Flip-flop

by WILLIAM H. CALVIN



ONE of the most shocking scientific realizations of all time has slowly been dawning on us: the earth's climate does great flip-flops every few thousand years, and with breathtaking speed. We could go back to ice-age temperatures within a decade—and judging from recent discoveries, an abrupt cooling could be triggered by our current global-warming trend. Europe's climate could become more like Siberia's. Because such a cooling would occur too quickly for us to make readjustments in agricultural productivity and supply, it would be a potentially civilization-shattering affair, likely to cause an unprecedented population crash. What paleoclimate and oceanography researchers know of the mechanisms underlying such a climate flip suggests that global warming could start one in several different ways.

For a quarter century global-warming theorists have predicted that climate creep is going to occur and that we need to prevent greenhouse gases from warming things up, thereby raising the sea level, destroying habitats, intensifying storms, and

forcing agricultural rearrangements. Now we know—and from an entirely different group of scientists exploring separate lines of reasoning and data—that the most catastrophic result of global warming could be an abrupt cooling.

“Climate change” is popularly understood to mean greenhouse warming, which, it is predicted, will cause flooding, severe windstorms, and killer heat waves. But warming could lead, paradoxically, to drastic cooling—a catastrophe that could threaten the survival of civilization

We are in a warm period now. Scientists have known for some time that the previous warm period started 130,000 years ago and ended 117,000 years ago, with the return of cold temperatures that led to an ice age. But the ice ages aren't what they used to be. They were formerly thought to be very gradual, with both air temperature and ice sheets changing in a slow, 100,000-year cycle tied to changes in the earth's orbit around the sun. But our current warm-up, which started about 15,000 years ago, began abruptly, with the temperature rising sharply while most of the ice was still present. We now know that there's nothing “glacially slow” about temperature change: superimposed on the gradual, long-term cycle have been dozens of abrupt warmings and coolings that lasted only centuries.

The back and forth of the ice

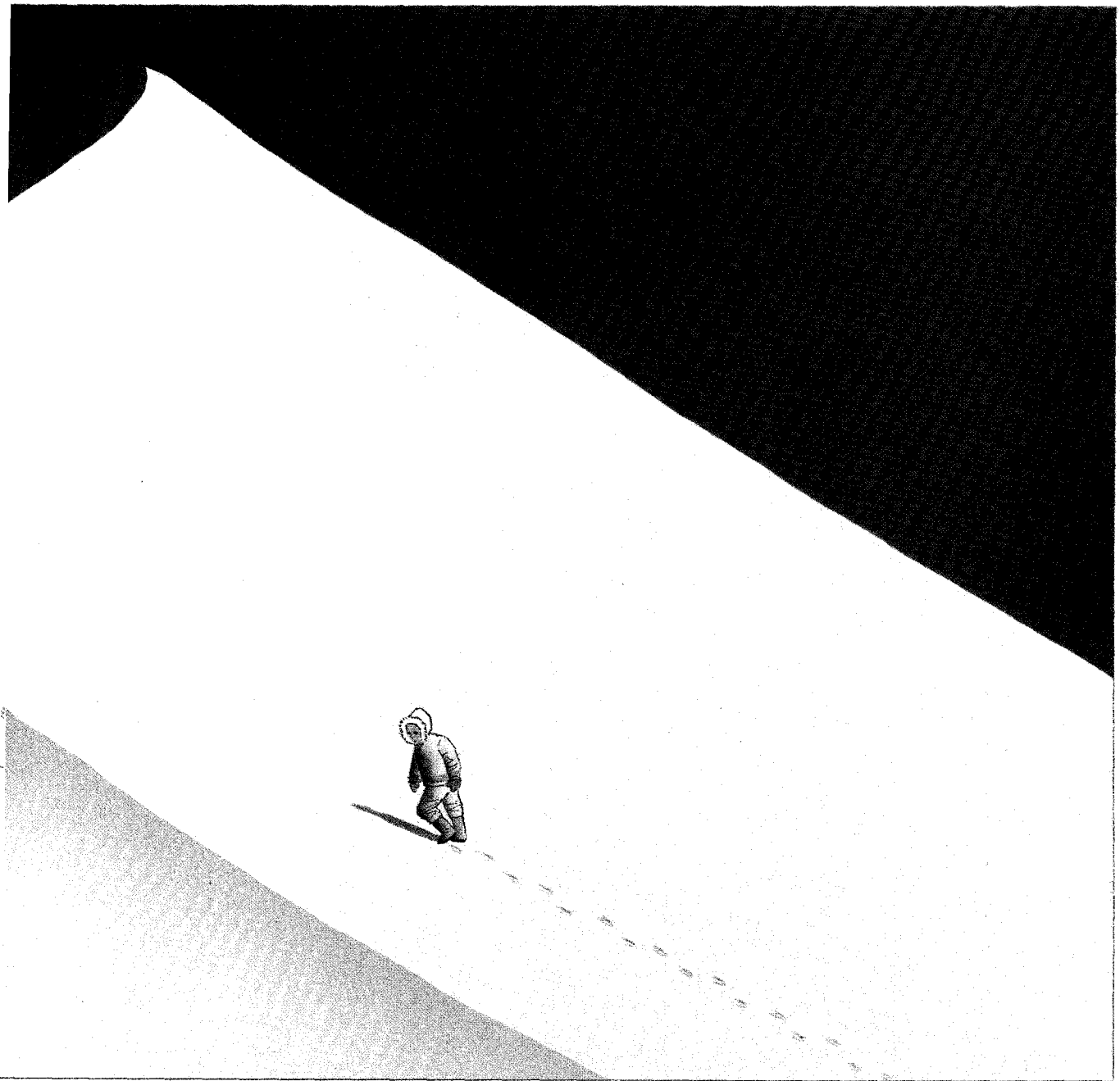




started 2.5 million years ago, which is also when the ape-sized hominid brain began to develop into a fully human one, four times as large and reorganized for language, music, and chains of inference. Ours is now a brain able to anticipate outcomes well enough to practice ethical behavior, able to head off disasters in the making by extrapolating trends. Our civilizations began to emerge right after the continental ice sheets melted about 10,000 years ago. Civilizations accumulate knowledge, so we now know a lot about what has been going on, what has made us what we are. We puzzle over oddities, such as the climate of Europe.

Keeping Europe Warm

EUROPE is an anomaly. The populous parts of the United States and Canada are mostly between the latitudes of 30° and 45°, whereas the populous parts of Europe are ten to fifteen degrees farther north. “Southerly” Rome lies near the same latitude, 42°N, as “northerly” Chicago—and the most northerly major city in Asia is Beijing, near 40°N. London and Paris are close to the 49°N



line that, west of the Great Lakes, separates the United States from Canada. Berlin is up at about 52° , Copenhagen and Moscow at about 56° . Oslo is nearly at 60°N , as are Stockholm, Helsinki, and St. Petersburg; continue due east and you'll encounter Anchorage.

Europe's climate, obviously, is not like that of North America or Asia at the same latitudes. For Europe to be as agriculturally productive as it is (it supports more than twice the population of the United States and Canada), all those cold, dry winds that blow eastward across the North Atlantic from Canada must somehow be warmed up. The

job is done by warm water flowing north from the tropics, as the eastbound Gulf Stream merges into the North Atlantic Current. This warm water then flows up the Norwegian coast, with a westward branch warming Greenland's tip, at 60°N . It keeps northern Europe about nine to eighteen degrees warmer in the winter than comparable latitudes elsewhere—except when it fails. Then not only Europe but also, to everyone's surprise, the rest of the world gets chilled. Tropical swamps decrease their production of methane at the same time that Europe cools, and the Gobi Desert whips much more dust into the air. When this hap-



The evidence suggests that global climate flips occur frequently and abruptly. The likeliest reason for these flips is an intermittent problem in the North Atlantic Ocean.

pens, something big, with worldwide connections, must be switching into a new mode of operation.

The North Atlantic Current is certainly something big, with the flow of about a hundred Amazon Rivers. And it sometimes changes its route dramatically, much as a bus route can be truncated into a shorter loop. Its effects are clearly global too, inasmuch as it is part of a long "salt conveyor" current that extends through the southern oceans into the Pacific.

I hope never to see a failure of the northernmost loop of the North Atlantic Current, because the result would be a population crash that would take much of civilization with it, all within a decade. Ways to postpone such a climatic

shift are conceivable, however—old-fashioned dam-and-ditch construction in critical locations might even work. Although we can't do much about everyday weather, we may nonetheless be able to stabilize the climate enough to prevent an abrupt cooling.

Abrupt Temperature Jumps

THE discovery of abrupt climate changes has been spread out over the past fifteen years, and is well known to readers of major scientific journals such as *Science* and *Nature*. The abruptness data are convincing. Within the ice sheets of Greenland are annual layers that provide a record of the gases present in the atmosphere and indicate the changes in air temperature over the past 250,000 years—the period of the last two major ice ages. By 250,000 years ago *Homo erectus* had died out, after a run of almost two million years. By 125,000 years ago *Homo sapiens* had evolved from our ancestor species—so the whiplash climate

changes of the last ice age affected people much like us.

In Greenland a given year's snowfall is compacted into ice during the ensuing years, trapping air bubbles, and so paleoclimate researchers have been able to glimpse ancient climates in some detail. Water falling as snow on Greenland carries an isotopic "fingerprint" of what the temperature was like en route. Counting those tree-ring-like layers in the ice cores shows that cooling came on as quickly as droughts. Indeed, were another climate flip to begin next year, we'd probably complain first about the drought, along with unusually cold winters in Europe. In the first few years the climate could cool as much as it did during the misnamed Little Ice Age (a gradual cooling that lasted from the early Renaissance until the end of the nineteenth century), with tenfold greater changes over the next decade or two.

The most recent big cooling started about 12,700 years ago, right in the midst of our last global warming. This cold period, known as the Younger Dryas, is named for the pollen of a tundra flower that turned up in a lake bed in Denmark when it shouldn't have. Things had been warming up, and half the ice sheets covering Europe and Canada had already melted. The return to ice-age temperatures lasted 1,300 years. Then, about 11,400 years ago, things suddenly warmed up again, and the earliest agricultural villages were established in the Middle East. An abrupt cooling got started 8,200 years ago, but it aborted within a century, and the temperature changes since then have been gradual in comparison. Indeed, we've had an unprecedented period of climate stability.

Coring old lake beds and examining the types of pollen trapped in sediment layers led to the discovery, early in the twentieth century, of the Younger Dryas. Pollen cores are still a primary means of seeing what regional climates were doing, even though they suffer from poorer resolution than ice cores (worms churn the sediment, obscuring records of all but the longest-lasting temperature changes). When the ice cores demonstrated the abrupt onset of the Younger Dryas, researchers wanted to know how widespread this event was. The U.S. Geological Survey took old lake-bed cores out of storage and re-examined them.

Ancient lakes near the Pacific coast of the United States, it turned out, show a shift to cold-weather plant species at roughly the time when the Younger Dryas was changing German pine forests into scrublands like those of modern Siberia. Subarctic ocean currents were reaching the southern California coastline, and Santa Barbara must have been as cold as Juneau is now. (But the regional record is poorly understood, and I know at least one reason why. These



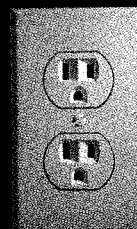
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days when one goes to hear a talk on ancient climates of North America, one is likely to learn that the speaker was forced into early retirement from the U.S. Geological Survey by budget cuts. Rather than a vigorous program of studying regional climatic change, we see the shortsighted preaching of cheaper government at any cost.)

In 1984, when I first heard about the startling news from the ice cores, the implications were unclear—there seemed to be other ways of interpreting the data from Greenland. It was initially hoped that the abrupt warmings and coolings were just an oddity of Greenland's weather—but they have now been detected on a worldwide scale, and at about the same time. Then it was hoped that the abrupt flips were somehow caused by continental ice sheets, and thus would be unlikely to recur, because we now lack huge ice sheets over Canada and Northern Europe. Though some abrupt coolings are likely to have been associated with events in the Canadian ice sheet, the abrupt cooling in the previous warm period, 122,000 years ago, which has now been detected even in the tropics, shows that flips are not restricted to icy periods; they can also interrupt warm periods like the present one.

There seems to be no way of escaping the conclusion that global climate flips occur frequently and abruptly. An abrupt cooling could happen now, and the world might not warm up again for a long time: it looks as if the last warm period, having lasted 13,000 years, came to an end with an abrupt, prolonged cooling. That's how our warm period might end too.

Sudden onset, sudden recovery—this is why I use the word "flip-flop" to describe these climate changes. They are utterly unlike the changes that one would expect from accumulating carbon dioxide or the setting adrift of ice shelves from Antarctica. Change arising from some sources, such as volcanic eruptions, can be abrupt—but

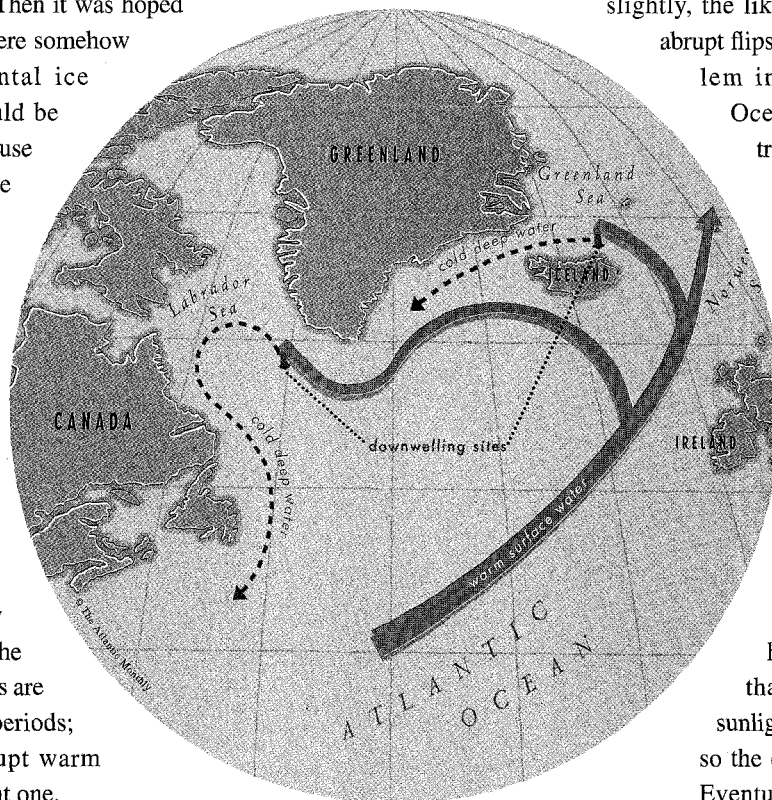
the climate doesn't flip back just as quickly centuries later.

Temperature records suggest that there is some grand mechanism underlying all of this, and that it has two major states. Again, the difference between them amounts to nine to eighteen degrees—a range that may depend on how much ice there is to slow the responses. I call the colder one the "low state." In discussing the ice ages there is a tendency to think of warm as good—and therefore of warming as better. Alas, further warming might well kick us out of the "high state." It's the high state that's good, and we may need to help prevent any sudden transition to the cold low state.

Although the sun's energy output does flicker slightly, the likeliest reason for these abrupt flips is an intermittent problem in the North Atlantic Ocean, one that seems to trigger a major rearrangement of atmospheric circulation. North-south ocean currents help to redistribute equatorial heat into the temperate zones, supplementing the heat transfer by winds. When the warm currents penetrate farther than usual into the northern seas, they help to melt the sea ice that is reflecting a lot of sunlight back into space, and so the earth becomes warmer. Eventually that helps to melt ice sheets elsewhere.

The high state of climate seems to involve ocean cur-

rents that deliver an extraordinary amount of heat to the vicinity of Iceland and Norway. Like bus routes or conveyor belts, ocean currents must have a return loop. Unlike most ocean currents, the North Atlantic Current has a return loop that runs deep beneath the ocean surface. Huge amounts of seawater sink at known downwelling sites every winter, with the water heading south when it reaches the bottom. When that annual flushing fails for some years, the conveyor belt stops moving and so heat stops flowing so far north—and apparently we're popped back into the low state.



THE NORTHERN LOOP
OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC CURRENT

Flushing Cold Surface Water

SURFACE waters are flushed regularly, even in lakes. Twice a year they sink, carrying their load of atmospheric gases downward. That's because water density changes with temperature. Water is densest at about 39°F (a typical refrigerator setting—anything that you take out of the refrigerator, whether you place it on the kitchen counter or move it to the freezer, is going to expand a little). A lake surface cooling down in the autumn will eventually sink into the less-dense-because-warmer waters below, mixing things up. Seawater is more complicated, because salt content also helps to determine whether water floats or sinks. Water that evaporates leaves its salt behind; the resulting saltier water is heavier and thus sinks.

The fact that excess salt is flushed from surface waters has global implications, some of them recognized two centuries ago. Salt circulates, because evaporation up north causes it to sink and be carried south by deep currents. This was posited in 1797 by the Anglo-American physicist Sir Benjamin Thompson (later known, after he moved to Bavaria, as Count Rumford of the Holy Roman Empire), who also posited that, if merely to compensate, there would have to be a warmer northbound current as well. By 1961 the oceanographer Henry Stommel, of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, in Massachusetts, was beginning to worry that these warming currents might stop flowing if too much fresh water was added to the surface of the northern seas. By 1987 the geochemist Wallace Broecker, of Columbia University, was piecing together the paleoclimatic flip-flops with the salt-circulation story and warning that small nudges to our climate might produce "unpleasant surprises in the greenhouse."

Oceans are not well mixed at any time. Like a half-beaten cake mix, with strands of egg still visible, the ocean has a lot of blobs and streams within it. When there has been a lot of evaporation, surface waters are saltier than usual. Sometimes they sink to considerable depths without mixing. The Mediterranean waters flowing out of the bottom of the Strait of Gibraltar into the Atlantic Ocean are about 10 percent saltier than the ocean's average, and so they sink into the depths of the Atlantic. A nice little Amazon-sized waterfall flows over the ridge that connects Spain with Morocco, 800 feet below the surface of the strait.

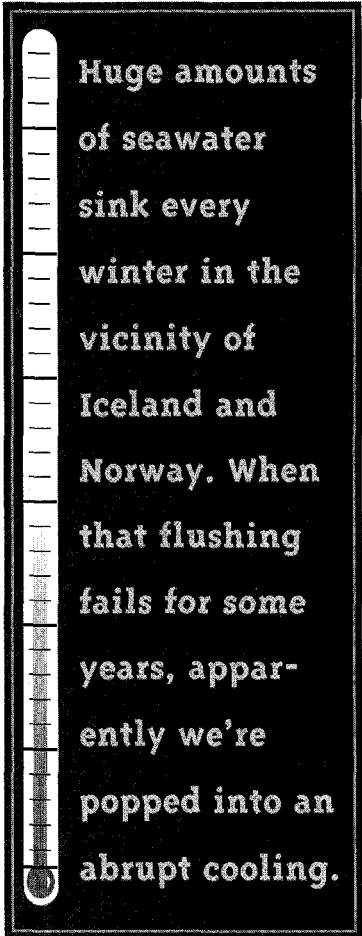
Another underwater ridge line stretches from Greenland to Iceland and on to the Faeroe Islands and Scotland. It, too, has a salty waterfall, which pours the hypersaline bot-

tom waters of the Nordic Seas (the Greenland Sea and the Norwegian Sea) south into the lower levels of the North Atlantic Ocean. This salty waterfall is more like thirty Amazon Rivers combined. Why does it exist? The cold, dry winds blowing eastward off Canada evaporate the surface waters of the North Atlantic Current, and leave behind all their salt. In late winter the heavy surface waters sink en masse. These blobs, pushed down by annual repetitions of these late-winter events, flow south, down near the bottom of the Atlantic. The same thing happens in the Labrador Sea between Canada and the southern tip of Greenland.

Salt sinking on such a grand scale in the Nordic Seas causes warm water to flow much farther north than it might otherwise do. This produces a heat bonus of perhaps 30 percent beyond the heat provided by direct sunlight to these seas, accounting for the mild winters downwind, in northern Europe. It has been called the Nordic Seas heat pump.

Nothing like this happens in the Pacific Ocean, but the Pacific is nonetheless affected, because the sink in the Nordic Seas is part of a vast worldwide salt-conveyor belt. Such a conveyor is needed because the Atlantic is saltier than the Pacific (the Pacific has twice as much water with which to dilute the salt carried in from rivers). The Atlantic would be even saltier if it didn't mix with the Pacific, in long, loopy currents. These carry the North Atlantic's excess salt southward from the bottom of the Atlantic, around the tip of Africa, through the Indian Ocean, and up around the Pacific Ocean.

There used to be a tropical shortcut, an express route from Atlantic to Pacific, but continental drift connected North America to South America about three million years ago, damming up the easy route for disposing of excess salt. The dam, known as the Isthmus of Panama,



**Huge amounts
of seawater
sink every
winter in the
vicinity of
Iceland and
Norway. When
that flushing
fails for some
years, appar-
ently we're
popped into an
abrupt cooling.**

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may have been what caused the ice ages to begin a short time later, simply because of the forced detour. This major change in ocean circulation, along with a climate that had already been slowly cooling for millions of years, led not only to ice accumulation most of the time but also to climatic instability, with flips every few thousand years or so.

F *Failures of Flushing*

LYING above the clouds often presents an interesting picture when there are mountains below. Out of the sea of undulating white clouds mountain peaks stick up like islands.

Greenland looks like that, even on a cloudless day—but the great white mass between the occasional punctuations is an ice sheet. In places this frozen fresh water descends from the highlands in a wavy staircase.

Twenty thousand years ago a similar ice sheet lay atop the Baltic Sea and the land surrounding it. Another sat on Hudson's Bay, and reached as far west as the foothills of the Rocky Mountains—where it pushed, head to head, against ice coming down from the Rockies. These northern ice sheets were as high as Greenland's mountains, obstacles sufficient to force the jet stream to make a detour.

Now only Greenland's ice remains, but the abrupt cooling in the last warm period shows that a flip can occur in situations much like the present one. What could possibly halt the salt-conveyor belt that brings tropical heat so much farther north and limits the formation of ice sheets? Oceanographers are busy studying present-day failures of annual flushing, which give some perspective on the catastrophic failures of the past.

In the Labrador Sea, flushing failed during the 1970s, was strong again by 1990, and is now declining. In the Greenland Sea over the 1980s salt sinking declined by 80 percent. Obviously, local failures can occur without catastrophe—it's a question of how often and how widespread the failures are—but the present state of decline is not very reassuring. Large-scale flushing at both those sites is certainly a highly variable process, and perhaps a somewhat fragile one as well. And in the absence of a flushing mechanism to sink cooled surface waters and send them southward in the Atlantic, additional warm waters do not flow as far north to replenish the supply.

There are a few obvious precursors to flushing failure.

One is diminished wind chill, when winds aren't as strong as usual, or as cold, or as dry—as is the case in the Labrador Sea during the North Atlantic Oscillation. This El Niño-like shift in the atmospheric-circulation pattern over the North Atlantic, from the Azores to Greenland, often lasts a decade. At the same time that the Labrador Sea gets a lessening of the strong winds that aid salt sinking, Europe gets particularly cold winters. It's happening right now: a North Atlantic Oscillation started in 1996.

Another precursor is more floating ice than usual, which reduces the amount of ocean surface exposed to the winds, in turn reducing evaporation. Retained heat eventually melts the ice, in a cycle that recurs about every five years.

Yet another precursor, as Henry Stommel suggested in 1961, would be the addition of fresh water to the ocean surface, diluting the salt-heavy surface waters before they became unstable enough to start sinking. More rain falling in the northern oceans—exactly what is predicted as a result of global warming—could stop salt flushing. So could ice carried south out of the Arctic Ocean.

There is also a great deal of unsalted water in Greenland's glaciers, just uphill from the major salt sinks. The last time an abrupt cooling occurred was in the midst of global warming. Many ice sheets had already half melted, dumping a lot of fresh water into the ocean.

A brief, large flood of fresh water might nudge us toward an abrupt cooling even if the dilution were insignificant when averaged over time. The fjords of Greenland offer some dramatic examples of the possibilities for fresh-water floods. Fjords are long, narrow canyons, little arms of the sea reaching many miles inland; they were carved by great glaciers when the sea level was lower. Greenland's east coast has a profusion of fjords between 70°N and 80°N, including one that is the world's biggest. If blocked by ice dams, fjords make perfect reservoirs for meltwater.

Glaciers pushing out into the ocean usually break off in chunks. Whole sections of a glacier, lifted up by the tides, may snap off at the "hinge" and become icebergs. But sometimes a glacial surge will act like an avalanche that blocks a road, as happened when Alaska's Hubbard glacier surged into the Russell fjord in May of 1986. Its snout ran into the opposite side, blocking the fjord with an ice dam. Any meltwater coming in behind the dam stayed there. A lake formed, rising higher and higher—up to the height of an eight-story building.

Eventually such ice dams break, with spectacular results. Once the dam is breached, the rushing waters erode an ever wider and deeper path. Thus the entire lake can

ARTIST: FATHULLA SHAKIROV, BORN 1960 (TASHKENT)

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The Nordic Seas

sink is part
of a worldwide
conveyor belt.

There used to
be a shortcut,
but it was

dammed up by
the Isthmus of
Panama, which

may have
begun the ice
ages.

empty quickly. Five months after the ice dam at the Russell fjord formed, it broke, dumping a cubic mile of fresh water in only twenty-four hours.

The Great Salinity Anomaly, a pool of semi-salty water derived from about 500 times as much unsalted water as that released by Russell Lake, was tracked from 1968 to 1982 as it moved south from Greenland's east coast. In 1970 it arrived in the Labrador Sea, where it prevented the usual salt sinking. By 1971–1972 the semi-salty blob was off Newfoundland. It then crossed the Atlantic and passed near the Shetland Islands around 1976. From there it was carried northward by the warm Norwegian Current, whereupon

some of it swung west again to arrive off Greenland's east coast—where it had started its inch-per-second journey. So freshwater blobs drift, sometimes causing major trouble, and Greenland floods thus have the potential to stop the enormous heat transfer that keeps the North Atlantic Current going strong.

The Greenhouse Connection

OF this much we're sure: global climate flip-flops have frequently happened in the past, and they're likely to happen again. It's also clear that sufficient global warming could trigger an abrupt cooling in at least two ways—by increasing high-latitude rainfall or by melting Greenland's ice, both of which could put enough fresh water into the ocean surface to suppress flushing.

Further investigation might lead to revisions in such mechanistic explanations, but the result of adding fresh water to the ocean surface is pretty standard physics.

In almost four decades of subsequent research Henry Stommel's theory has only been enhanced, not seriously challenged.

Up to this point in the story none of the broad conclusions is particularly speculative. But to address how all these nonlinear mechanisms fit together—and what we might do to stabilize the climate—will require some speculation.

Even the tropics cool down by about nine degrees during an abrupt cooling, and it is hard to imagine what in the past could have disturbed the whole earth's climate on this scale. We must look at arriving sunlight and departing light and heat, not merely regional shifts on earth, to account for changes in the temperature balance. Increasing amounts of sea ice and clouds could reflect more sunlight back into space, but the geochemist Wallace Broecker suggests that a major greenhouse gas is disturbed by the failure of the salt conveyor, and that this affects the amount of heat retained.

In Broecker's view, failures of salt flushing cause a worldwide rearrangement of ocean currents, resulting in—and this is the speculative part—less evaporation from the tropics. That, in turn, makes the air drier. Because water vapor is the most powerful greenhouse gas, this decrease in average humidity would cool things globally. Broecker has written, "If you wanted to cool the planet by 5°C [9°F] and could magically alter the water-vapor content of the atmosphere, a 30 percent decrease would do the job."

Just as an El Niño produces a hotter Equator in the Pacific Ocean and generates more atmospheric convection, so there might be a subnormal mode that decreases heat, convection, and evaporation. For example, I can imagine that ocean currents carrying more warm surface waters north or south from the equatorial regions might, in consequence, cool the Equator somewhat. That might result in less evaporation, creating lower-than-normal levels of greenhouse gases and thus a global cooling.

To see how ocean circulation might affect greenhouse gases, we must try to account quantitatively for important nonlinearities, ones in which little nudges provoke great responses. The modern world is full of objects and systems that exhibit "bistable" modes, with thresholds for flipping. Light switches abruptly change mode when nudged hard enough. Door latches suddenly give way. A gentle pull on a trigger may be ineffective, but there comes a pressure that will suddenly fire the gun. Thermostats tend to activate heating or cooling mechanisms abruptly—also an example of a system that pushes back.

We must be careful not to think of an abrupt cooling in



response to global warming as just another self-regulatory device, a control system for cooling things down when it gets too hot. The scale of the response will be far beyond the bounds of regulation—more like when excess warming triggers fire extinguishers in the ceiling, ruining the contents of the room while cooling them down.

Preventing Climate Flips

THOUGH combating global warming is obviously on the agenda for preventing a cold flip, we could easily be blindsided by stability problems if we allow global warming per se to remain the main focus of our climate-change efforts. To stabilize our flip-flopping climate we'll need to identify all the important feedbacks that control climate and ocean currents—evaporation, the reflection of sunlight back into space, and so on—and then estimate their relative strengths and interactions in computer models.

Feedbacks are what determine thresholds, where one

mode flips into another. Near a threshold one can sometimes observe abortive responses, rather like the act of stepping back onto a curb several times before finally running across a busy street. Abortive responses and rapid chattering between modes are common problems in nonlinear systems with not quite enough oomph—the reason that old fluorescent lights flicker. To keep a bi-stable system firmly in one state or the other, it should be kept away from the transition threshold.

We need to make sure that no business-as-usual climate variation, such as an El Niño or the North Atlantic Oscillation, can push our climate onto the slippery slope and into an abrupt cooling. Of particular importance are combinations of climate variations—this winter, for example, we are experiencing both an El Niño and a North Atlantic Oscillation—because such combinations can add up to much more than the sum of their parts.

We are near the end of a warm period in any event; ice ages return even without human influences on climate. The last warm period abruptly terminated 13,000 years after the abrupt warming that initiated it, and we've already gone 15,000 years from a similar starting point. But we

BEAUTY AND THE SHOE SLUTS

Mother kneels at her closet of dancing shoes
to see which ones I fit—sherbet-green
taffeta and crimson crocodile, pumps

in Easter pink, plus a dozen black heels
with bows or aglisten with rhinestones,
all wicked run down. Likewise,

she's gnarled as a tree root, her spine's
warped her shorter than me, over whom
she once towered with red hair

brushed back into flame points.
Seeing her handle those scarred leather hides, I quote
the maenads' sad lament from *The Bacchae*.

After they've chased down

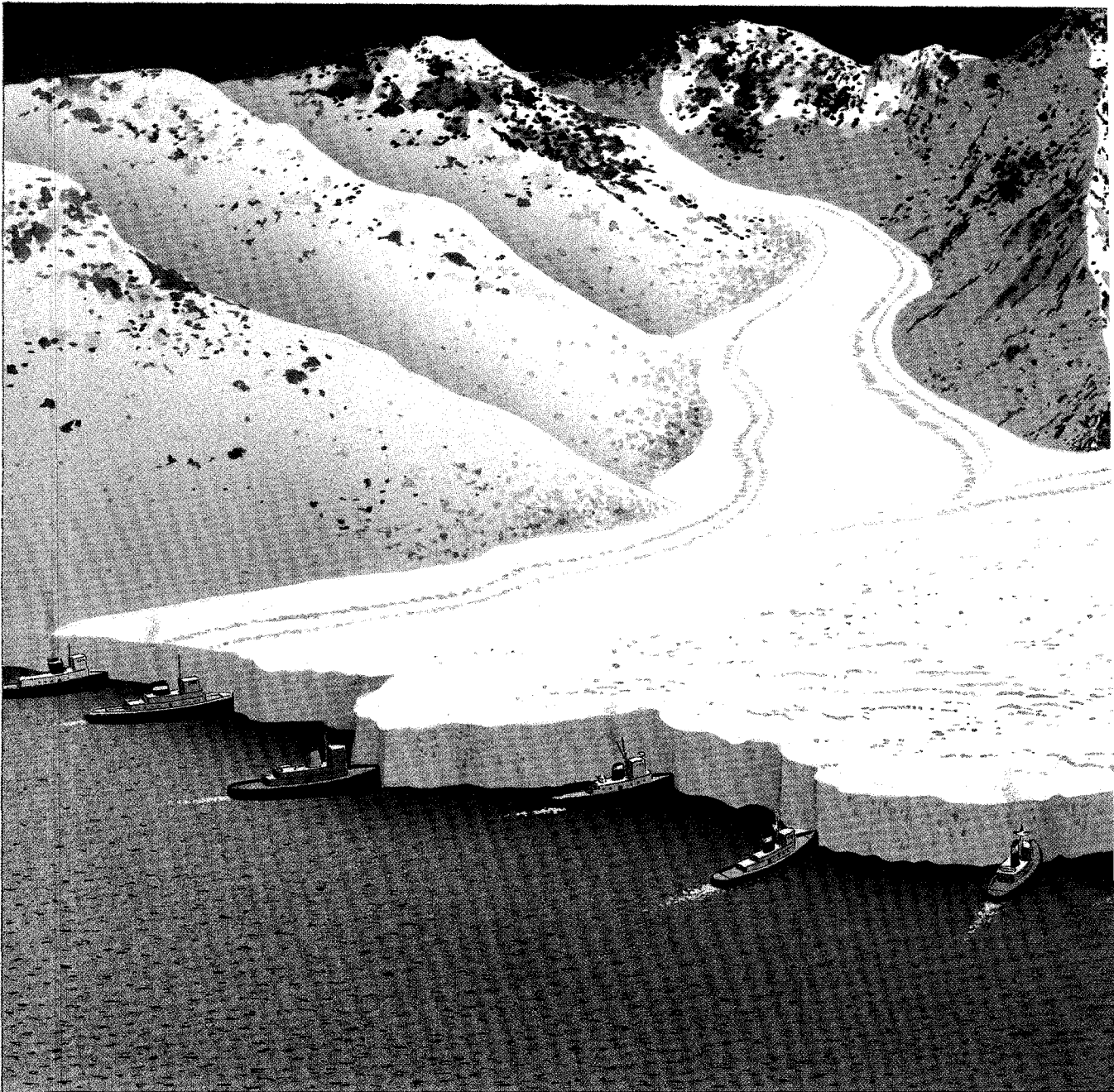
the fleeing god, fucked him dead, sucked
all flesh from his bones, dawn spills light

on their blood-sticky mouths,
and it's like every party you ever stayed
too late at. In chorus they sing and grieve:

"Will they come to me ever again,
the long, long dances?"
And Mother holding a black-patent ankle strap

like a shackle on a spike heel
it must've been teetering hell to wear glances
sidewise from her cloudy hazel eyes and says, "No,
praise God and menopause, they won't."

—MARY KARR



may be able to do something to delay an abrupt cooling.

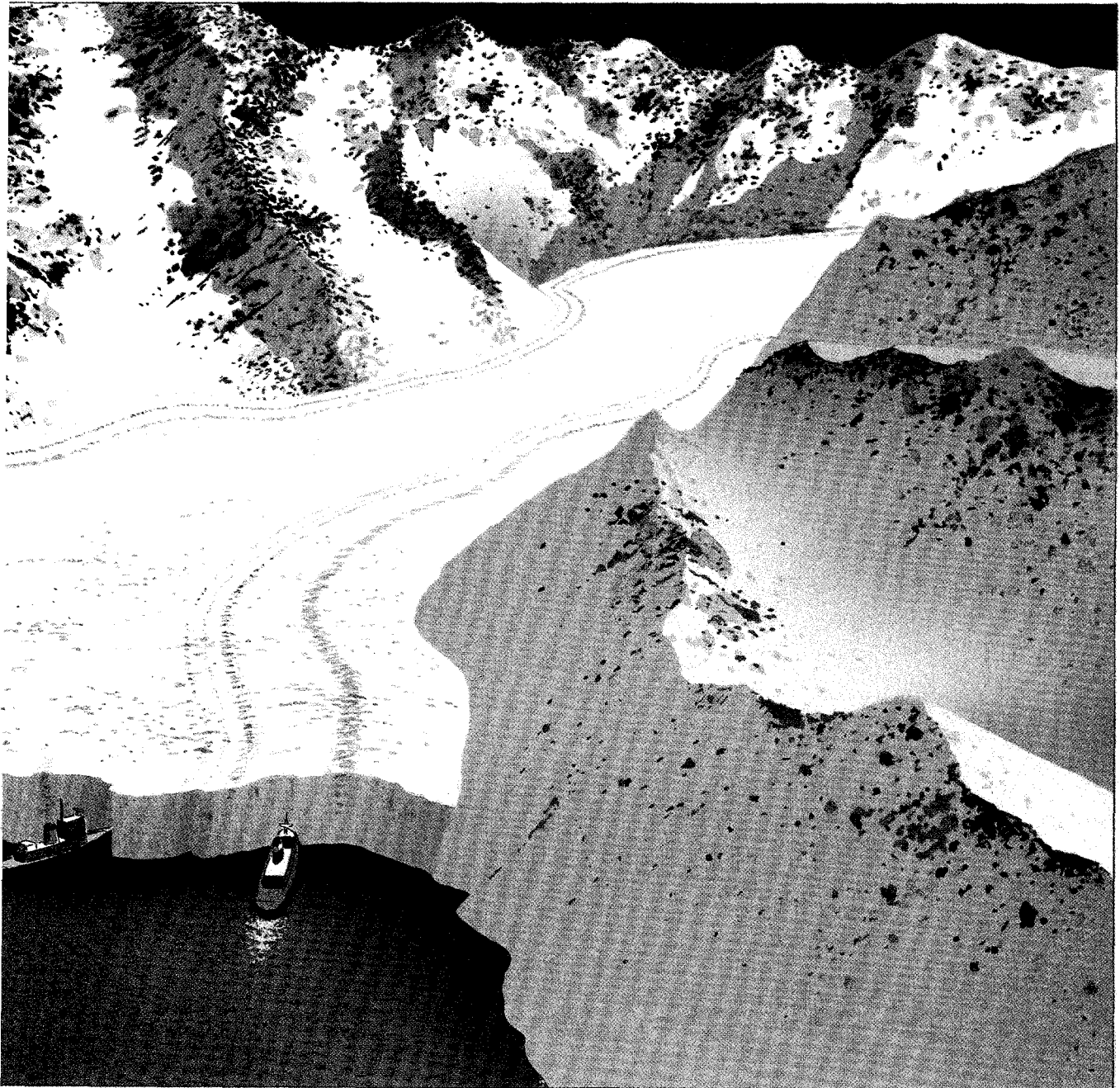
Do something? This tends to stagger the imagination, immediately conjuring up visions of terraforming on a science-fiction scale—and so we shake our heads and say, “Better to fight global warming by consuming less,” and so forth.

Surprisingly, it may prove possible to prevent flip-flops in the climate—even by means of low-tech schemes. Keeping the present climate from falling back into the low state will in any case be a lot easier than trying to reverse such a change after it has occurred. Were fjord floods causing flushing to fail, because the downwelling sites were fairly close to

the fjords, it is obvious that we could solve the problem. All we would need to do is open a channel through the ice dam with explosives before dangerous levels of water built up.

Timing could be everything, given the delayed effects from inch-per-second circulation patterns, but that, too, potentially has a low-tech solution: build dams across the major fjord systems and hold back the meltwater at critical times. Or divert eastern-Greenland meltwater to the less sensitive north and west coasts.

Fortunately, big parallel computers have proved useful for both global climate modeling and detailed modeling of



ocean circulation. They even show the flips. Computer models might not yet be able to predict what will happen if we tamper with downwelling sites, but this problem doesn't seem insoluble. We need more well-trained people, bigger computers, more coring of the ocean floor and silted-up lakes, more ships to drag instrument packages through the depths, more instrumented buoys to study critical sites in detail, more satellites measuring regional variations in the sea surface, and perhaps some small-scale trial runs of interventions.

It would be especially nice to see another dozen major

groups of scientists doing climate simulations, discovering the intervention mistakes as quickly as possible and learning from them. Medieval cathedral builders learned from their design mistakes over the centuries, and their undertakings were a far larger drain on the economic resources and people power of their day than anything yet discussed for stabilizing the climate in the twenty-first century. We may not have centuries to spare, but any economy in which two percent of the population produces all the food, as is the case in the United States today, has lots of resources and many options for reordering priorities.



Three Scenarios

FUTURISTS have learned to bracket the future with alternative scenarios, each of which captures important features that cluster together, each of which is compact enough to be seen as a narrative on a human scale. Three scenarios for the next climatic phase might be called population crash, cheap fix, and muddling through.

The population-crash scenario is surely the most appalling. Plummeting crop yields would cause some powerful countries to try to take over their neighbors or distant lands—if only because their armies, unpaid and lacking food, would go marauding, both at home and across the borders. The better-organized countries would attempt to use their armies, before they fell apart entirely, to take over countries with significant remaining resources, driving out or starving their inhabitants if not using modern weapons to accomplish the same end: eliminating competitors for the remaining food.

This would be a worldwide problem—and could lead to a Third World War—but Europe's vulnerability is particularly easy to analyze. The last abrupt cooling, the Younger Dryas, drastically altered Europe's climate as far east as Ukraine. Present-day Europe has more than 650 million people. It has excellent soils, and largely grows its own food. It could no longer do so if it lost the extra warming from the North Atlantic.

There is another part of the world with the same good soil, within the same latitudinal band, which we can use for a quick comparison. Canada lacks Europe's winter warmth and rainfall, because it has no equivalent of the North Atlantic Current to preheat its eastbound weather systems. Canada's agriculture supports about 28 million

people. If Europe had weather like Canada's, it could feed only one out of twenty-three present-day Europeans.

Any abrupt switch in climate would also disrupt food-supply routes. The only reason that two percent of our population can feed the other 98 percent is that we have a well-developed system of transportation and middlemen—but it is not very robust. The system allows for large urban populations in the best of times, but not in the case of widespread disruptions.

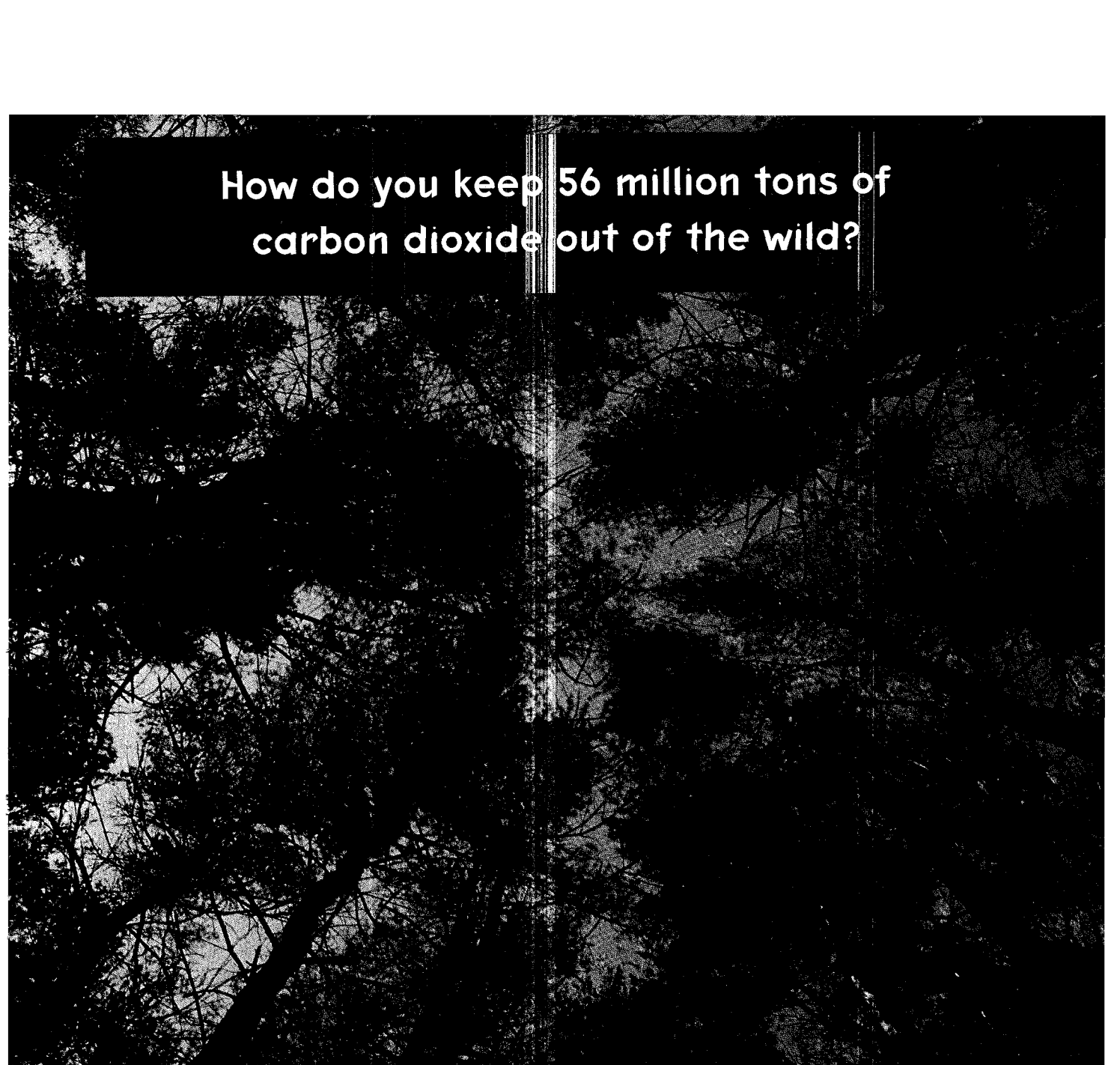
Natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes are less troubling than abrupt coolings for two reasons: they're short (the recovery period starts the next day) and they're local or regional (unaffected citizens can help the overwhelmed). There is, increasingly, international cooperation in response to catastrophe—but no country is going to be able to rely on a stored agricultural surplus for even a year, and any country will be reluctant to give away part of its surplus.

In an abrupt cooling the problem would get worse for decades, and much of the earth would be affected. A meteor strike that killed most of the population in a month would not be as serious as an abrupt cooling that eventually killed just as many. With the population crash spread out over a decade, there would be ample opportunity for civilization's institutions to be torn apart and for hatreds to build, as armies tried to grab remaining resources simply to feed the people in their own countries. The effects of an abrupt cold last for centuries. They might not be the end of *Homo sapiens*—written knowledge and elementary education might well endure—but the world after such a population crash would certainly be full of despotic governments that hated their neighbors because of recent atrocities. Recovery would be very slow.

A slightly exaggerated version of our present know-something-do-nothing state of affairs is know-nothing-do-nothing: a reduction in science as usual, further limiting our chances of discovering a way out. History is full of withdrawals from knowledge-seeking, whether for reasons of fundamentalism, fatalism, or "government lite" economics. This scenario does not require that the shortsighted be in charge, only that they have enough influence to put the relevant science agencies on starvation budgets and to send recommendations back for yet another commission report due five years hence.

A cheap-fix scenario, such as building or bombing a dam, presumes that we know enough to prevent trouble, or to nip a developing problem in the bud. But just as vaccines and antibiotics presume much knowledge about diseases, their climatic equivalents presume much knowledge

I hope never
to see a failure
of the northern
loop of the
North Atlantic
Current.
The resulting
population
crash would
take much of
civilization
with it, all in
a decade.



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about oceans, atmospheres, and past climates. Suppose we had reports that winter salt flushing was confined to certain areas, that abrupt shifts in the past were associated with localized flushing failures, *and* that one computer model after another suggested a solution that was likely to work even under a wide range of weather extremes. A quick fix, such as bombing an ice dam, might then be possible. Although I don't consider this scenario to be the most likely one, it is possible that solutions could turn out to be cheap and easy, and that another abrupt cooling isn't inevitable. Fatalism, in other words, might well be foolish.

A muddle-through scenario assumes that we would mobilize our scientific and technological resources well in advance of any abrupt cooling problem, but that the solution wouldn't be simple. Instead we would try one thing after another, creating a patchwork of solutions that might hold for another few decades, allowing the search for a better stabilizing mechanism to continue.

We might, for example, anchor bargeloads of evaporation-enhancing surfactants (used in the southwest corner of the Dead Sea to speed potash production) upwind from critical downwelling sites, letting winds spread them over the ocean surface all winter, just to ensure later flushing. We might create a rain shadow, seeding clouds so that they dropped their unsalted water well upwind of a given year's critical flushing sites—a strategy that might be particularly important in view of the increased rainfall expected from global warming. We might undertake to regulate the Mediterranean's salty outflow, which is also thought to disrupt the North Atlantic Current.

Perhaps computer simulations will tell us that the only robust solutions are those that re-create the ocean currents of three million years ago, before the Isthmus of Panama closed off the express route for excess-salt disposal. Thus we might dig a wide sea-level Panama Canal in stages, carefully managing the changeover.

Staying in the "Comfort Zone"

STABILIZING our flip-flopping climate is not a simple matter. We need heat in the right places, such as the Greenland Sea, and not in others right next door, such as Greenland itself. Man-made global warming is likely to achieve exactly the opposite—warming Greenland and cooling the Greenland Sea.

A remarkable amount of specious reasoning is often en-

countered when we contemplate reducing carbon-dioxide emissions. That increased quantities of greenhouse gases will lead to global warming is as solid a scientific prediction as can be found, but other things influence climate too, and some people try to escape confronting the consequences of our pumping more and more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere by supposing that something will come along miraculously to counteract them. Volcanos spew sulfates, as do our own smokestacks, and these reflect some sunlight back into space, particularly over the North Atlantic and Europe. But we can't assume that anything like this will counteract our longer-term flurry of carbon-dioxide emissions. Only the most naive gamblers bet against physics, and only the most irresponsible bet with their grandchildren's resources.

To the long list of predicted consequences of global warming—stronger storms, methane release, habitat changes, ice-sheet melting, rising seas, stronger El Niños, killer heat waves—we must now add an abrupt, catastrophic cooling. Whereas the familiar consequences of global warming will force expensive but gradual adjustments, the abrupt cooling promoted by man-made warming looks like a particularly efficient means of committing mass suicide.

We cannot avoid trouble by merely cutting down on our present warming trend, though that's an excellent place to start. Paleoclimatic records reveal that any notion we may once have had that the climate will remain the same unless pollution changes it is wishful thinking. Judging from the duration of the last warm period, we are probably near the end of the current one. Our goal must be to stabilize the climate in its favorable mode and ensure that enough equatorial heat continues to flow into the waters around Greenland and Norway. A stabilized climate must have a wide "comfort zone," and be able to survive the El Niños of the short term. We can design for that in computer models of climate, just as architects design earthquake-resistant skyscrapers. Implementing it might cost no more, in relative terms, than building a medieval cathedral. But we may not have centuries for acquiring wisdom, and it would be wise to compress our learning into the years immediately ahead. We have to discover what has made the climate of the past 8,000 years relatively stable, and then figure out how to prop it up.

Those who will not reason
Perish in the act:
Those who will not act
Perish for that reason.

—W. H. Auden

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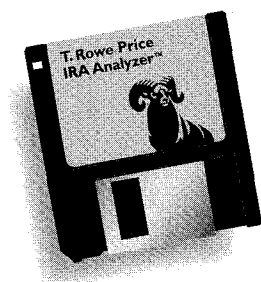
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Charger

by BOBBIE ANN MASON

Since his father
disappeared, Charger
had been catapulted forward.
He saw too far ahead.
He wanted to plunge into
the darkness and not
be afraid

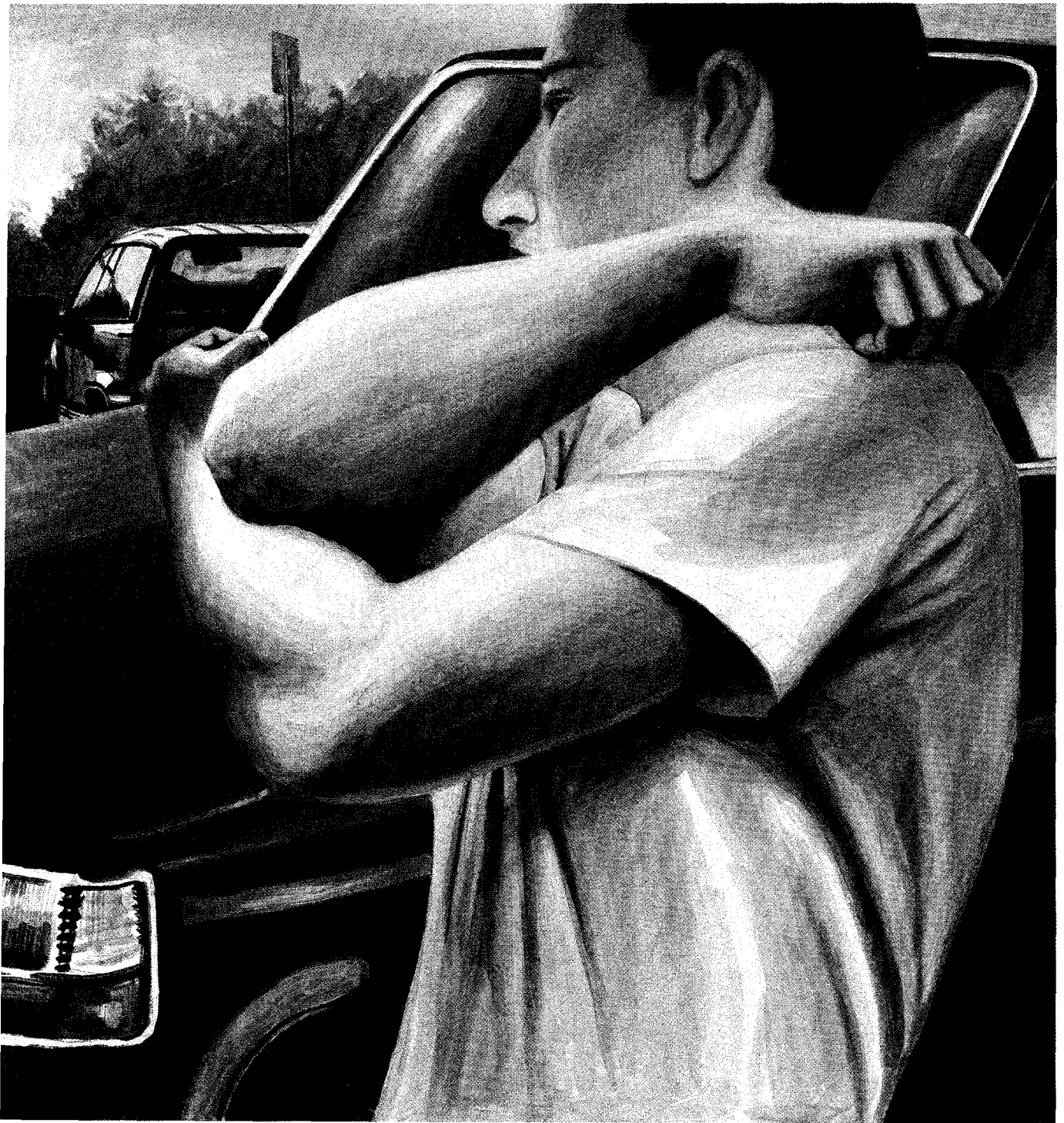
As he drove to the shopping center, Charger rehearsed how he was going to persuade his girlfriend, Tiffany Marie Sanderson, to get him some of her aunt Paula's Prozac. He just wanted to try it, to see if it was right for him. Tiffany hadn't taken him seriously when he had mentioned it before. "Don't you like to try new things?" he asked her. He would try anything, except unconventional food. But she seemed more interested in redecorating her room than in revamping her mind.

He cruised past the fast-food strip, veered into the left-turn lane, and stopped at the light. He stared at the red arrow like a cat waiting to pounce. He made the turn and scooted into a good spot in the shopping-center parking lot. At the drink machines in front of the home-fashions store where Tiffany worked after school, he reached into his work pants for a couple of quarters. He needed to wash himself out. He felt contaminated from the chemicals at work. He fed the quarters into a machine, randomly selecting the drink he would have chosen anyway—the Classic. He wondered if there was any freedom of choice about anything.

Tiffany wanted to get married in June, right after her graduation. He had not proposed, exactly, but the idea had grown. He was uneasy about it. His mother said he was too young to marry—nineteen, a baby. She pointed out that



he could barely make his truck payments and said that Tiffany would expect new furniture and a washer and dryer. And Charger knew that Tiffany's fat-assed father disapproved of him. He said Charger was the type of person who would fall through the cracks when he found out he couldn't rely on his goofy charm to keep him out of trouble. Tiffany's father called it "riding on your face." Charger was inclined to take that as a compliment. He believed you had to use your natural skills to straddle the cracks of life if you were going to get anywhere at all. Apparently he



gave the impression that he wasn't ready for anything—like a person half dressed who suddenly finds himself crossing the street. But he was *not* a fuckup, he insisted to himself.

Tiffany appeared in front of the store, a bright smile spreading across her face. She wore tight little layers of slinky black. She had her hair wadded up high on her head like a squirrel's nest, with spangles hanging all over it. She had on streaks of pink makeup and heavy black eyebrows applied like pressure-sensitive stickers. She was gorgeous.

"Hi, babe," she said, squinching her lips in an air kiss.

"Hi, beautiful," Charger said. "Want something to drink?" Then she raised her hand and he saw the bandage on her thumb. "Hey, what happened?" he asked, touching her hand.

"I mashed my thumb in the drill press in shop."

"Holy shit! You drilled a hole in your thumb?"

"No. It's just a bruise. It's not as bad as it looks."

"How did it happen?" He held her hand, but she pulled it away from him.

"I was holding a piece of wood for Tammy Watkins? And

we were yakking away, and I had my thumb in too far, and she brought the drill press right down on my thumb. But not the drill, just the press part."

"I bet that *hurt*. Does it still hurt?"

"It's okay. I'm just lucky I didn't lose my dumb thumb."

As they walked down the sidewalk, she repeated the details of her accident. He gulped some Coke. His stomach burned. He could hardly bear to listen as he imagined the drill press crunching her thumb. He whistled in that ridiculous way one does on learning something astounding. Then he whistled again, just to hear the sound. It blotted out the image of the drill going through her thumb.

"I might lose my thumbnail, but it'll grow in again," Tiffany said.

"I wish I could kiss it and make it all better," he said. His throat ached, and he itched.

"No problem," she said. "Didn't you ever mash a finger with a hammer?"

"Yeah. One time when I was cracking hickory nuts."

A young couple carrying a baby in a plastic cradle emerged from the pizza place. The woman was mumbling something about rights. The man said, "I don't give a damn what you do. Go to Paducah for all I care."

Charger guided Tiffany by the elbow through the traffic into the parking lot. She said, "I asked Aunt Paula about her pills, and she said I didn't need one." Tiffany swung her bandaged hand awkwardly in his direction, as if she were practicing a karate move. She laughed. "And I can't open her pill bottle and sneak one out with this thing on my thumb."

"It looks like a little Kotex," he said.

She giggled. "Not exactly. How would you know?"

"Did you tell Paula the pill was for me?"

"No." Her voice shifted into exasperation. "If you want one, go ask her yourself."

"Man, I gotta get me one of those pills." He struck a theatrical pose, flinging the back of his hand against his forehead. "I'm so depressed, I'm liable to just set down right here in the parking lot and melt into that spot of gop over there. I get depressed easy." He snapped his fingers. "I go down just like that."

They reached his truck, and he slammed his hands on the hot hood. Then he realized that Tiffany was holding up her thumb like a hitchhiker, waiting for him to open the door for her. She said, "Charger, you're not depressed. I don't believe that. It's just something you've heard on TV."

"When do I hear TV? I don't even watch it." They were talking across the hood.

"I don't get depressed," Tiffany said. Her hair seemed to lift like wings, along with her spirit. "I always say, if I've got my lipstick on, nothing else matters."

"I know, Miss Sunshine."

"Why would you get depressed anyway? You've got a decent job at the bomb plant. You've got a truck with floating

blue lights. You've got a fiancée—me. You've got nothing to complain about."

Charger didn't answer. Stepping around to her side, he opened the door and boosted her in. The fun of having a high-rider was helping girls in, cupping their rear pears in his eager paws. Yet he had not tried out this automotive technique on many girls, because he started going with Tiffany soon after he bought the truck. She always squealed with pleasure when he heaved her in. Charger had fallen for Tiffany when she stole the Yard of the Month sign from someone's yard and ran naked with it down the street at midnight. He had dared her to do it, while he waited in his truck at the end of the street. It was a street where big dudes lived, people who spent piles of money on yard decorators and had swimming pools behind fences. Now he loved her, probably, and he wanted to have sex with her every day, but he had trouble telling her his deepest thoughts. He didn't want her to laugh at him. He wasn't sure he *was* depressed, but he was curious about Prozac. It was all the rage. He had heard it was supposed to rewire the brain. That idea intrigued him. He liked the sound of it too—Prozac, like some professional athlete named Zack. "Hi, I'm Zack. And I'm a pro. I'm a pro at everything I do. Just call me Pro Zack."

Tiffany had told him that her aunt Paula took Prozac because she was worried about her eyelids bagging. Her insurance wouldn't cover a facelift or an eye tuck, but it would pay for anti-depressants if she was depressed about her face—or about her health coverage. Prozac seemed to give her a charge of self-esteem, so that she could live with her baggy eyes. "I feel good about myself," Paula was fond of announcing now.

That was what Charger was interested in—a shift of attitude. Bad moods scared him. He didn't know where they came from. Sometimes he just spit at the world and roared around like a demon in his truck, full of meanness. He had actually kicked at his father's dog, and the other day he deliberately dropped his mother's Christmas cactus, still wrapped in its florist's foil. His father had disappeared in December, and now it was May. Months passed before they heard from him. His mother pretended indifference. She didn't even call the police or report him missing. "He'll come back with his tail between his legs," she said. Charger believed that she knew where his father was and just didn't want him to know.

Charger answered the telephone when his father finally called, in April, from Texas. He had left the day before Christmas and just kept driving; once he got out of Kentucky, he couldn't turn back, he said. Might as well see what there is to see, he said. He hadn't had a chance to call, and he knew Charger's mother wouldn't worry about him.

"Are you coming back?" Charger wanted to know.

"Depends on what the future holds," his father said vaguely.

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"What do you mean by that?" Charger said, thinking that his father wouldn't be happy even if he did come back. He realized how sad-faced and thin his dad had been. He was probably having a better time where he was, out looking at skies. "I never knew about skies before," his dad had said in a mysteriously melancholy voice. He started singing a song, as if the telephone were a microphone and he had grabbed a stage opportunity. "Ole buttermilk sky, can't you see my little donkey and me, we're as happy as a Christmas tree." In a hundred years Charger would not have imagined his dad bursting into song.

CHARGER sometimes looked at his life as if he were a spy peering through a telescope. The next afternoon he could see himself and Tiffany as though he were watching from the other side of town. He saw a carefree young couple frolicking at Wal-Mart together. At least that was how he tried to picture himself with Tiffany—as beautiful people in a commercial, scooting around having fun. They played hide-and-go-seek in the maze of tall aisles, piled to the ceiling with goods. He whistled "Buttermilk Sky," and she followed the sound from aisle to aisle. She caught him in lingerie, where the canyons of housewares gave way to prairies of delicate flowers.

"I win!" she cried, taunting him with a pair of pink panties on a hanger.

A country-western star was at the store that day, signing pictures to promote his new album. He was a young heart-throb named Andy or Randy something. He was sitting at a table next to a shopping cart full of his CDs. Charger didn't trust the guy. His shirt was too fancy.

"Bet he didn't buy them duds here," Charger said to Tiffany.

"He doesn't have to," Tiffany said, her breath trailing like gauze. "Oh, I've got to get his autograph."

Charger stood waiting in line with Tiffany, feeling ridiculous. Tiffany had on snake pants. Her legs looked like two sensational boa constrictors. They were attracting comments. A woman and a little girl were standing in line behind Charger and Tiffany. The woman—overdressed in beads and floral fabric—was eyeing Tiffany.

"She's going on his tour," Charger told the woman impulsively. "She's a singer."

"Oh!" the woman gasped. "Do you know him?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact," Charger told the woman. He felt his orneriness kicking in. He couldn't help himself when opportunities like this arose. "We're in his entourage. What do you need to know about country's newest sensation, Randy what's-his-name?"

"Andy," Tiffany said, elbowing him.

The woman said, "I'm a lounge pianist and former gospel artist? I've been trying for months to get my tapes to Andy."

She had the tapes in her hand. "I know he'd love them. Our hearts are on the same wavelength. His songs tell my life story." She jerked her head to the left. "Get back here, Reba," she yelled to the little girl, who had spun off down the cosmetics aisle. She reeled the child in and continued at some length. She said her life was a Barbara Mandrell kind of story, involving a car wreck and a comeback. The woman wore a country-music hairdo—a mountain of frizz and fluff that looked to Charger as though it had sprung out of a jack-in-the-box.

A number of young girls in the line—pre-babe material, Charger thought—had long frizzed and fluffed hair too.

"Your story is an inspiration," Charger said to the woman.

Tiffany whispered to Charger, "You're embarrassing me."

The gospel-lounge singer heard and frowned at Tiffany. Charger imagined the woman sticking out her tongue.

Charger said, "If you give me your name and number, I'll have you on television inside a month."

"Here's my card," the woman said. "You'll put in a word to him about my tapes, won't you?" She took her child's hand. "Come on, Reba. Stay in this line or I'm going to skin your butt."

The little girl clutched one of Andy's CDs and a box of hamster food.

"I like hamsters. I had hamster for supper last night," Charger said, making a face at the child.

Tiffany made the same face at Charger. "Why do you do things like that?" she said. "It irks me."

"Irk? I *irk*? Well, pardon me all over the place." He flapped his arms like a bird. "*Irk. Irk.*" Teasingly, he nudged Tiffany with his knee, and then pinched her on the rear end. "I'm a hawk. *Irk.*"

"Cool."

Afterward, as they drove out of the crowded parking lot, Tiffany was engrossed in her autographed picture of the cowboy warbler. As she traced her finger along the signature, her bandaged thumb seemed to erase his face. She had grown quiet when it was her turn to meet the star. She had said to him, "All I can say is 'Wow.'"

"He probably never heard anything so stupid," she said now, as Charger turned onto the main drag. "I was so excited I couldn't think of what to say!"



"I'm sure what you said is exactly what he wanted to hear," Charger said. "He eats it up. Isn't he from Atlanta? He probably thinks we're just dumb hicks here."

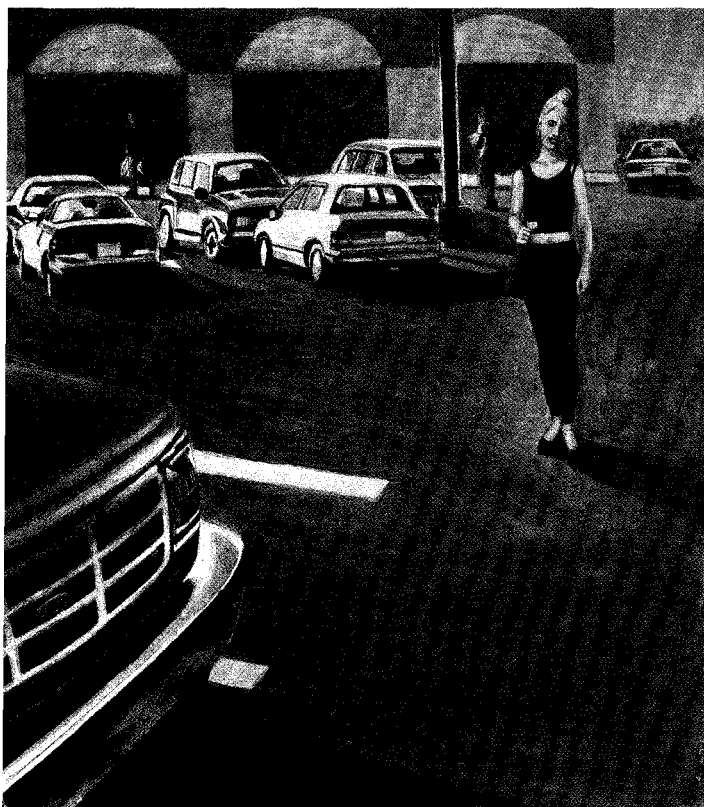
Tiffany said excitedly, "Oh, let's go to Atlanta this weekend."

"And blow my paycheck?"

"We can manage."

Charger braked at the red light. He stared at Tiffany as if he had just picked up a hitchhiker. Sometimes he felt he didn't know her at all. Her snake legs squirmed—impatient to shed their skins, he thought.

ON Friday after work Charger decided to go straight to the source. He thought that Tiffany's aunt might give him some of her Prozac if he caught her in the right mood. Paula was okay. She covered for them when Tiffany spent the night with him. Paula said that her sister, Tiffany's



mother, would die if she knew about the little overnight trips in Charger's truck.

Paula hadn't expected him, but she seemed pleased to see him at the door. She brought him through the living room into the kitchen. "Don't look at this garbage," she said.

She had school projects—flags and Uncle Sam dolls and Paul Revere hats—scattered around. She taught fourth grade.

Charger noticed that her eyelids drooped down onto her eyelashes, but her face had few wrinkles. He wondered how

long Tiffany's eyelids would hold up. She resembled her aunt—the same smidgen nose and whirlpool curls.

Paula handed him a glass of ice and a two-liter Coke. He poured, and the Coke foamed over onto the kitchen counter. He sat numbly on a stool, embarrassed. While she wiped up the spill, she said, "This morning I dressed in the dark and put on one blue sock and one green sock?" She laughed. "At school I got a citation for a fashion violation. At school we get citations for bad hair, static cling, leopard-skin underwear beneath white pants, color clash, sock displacement. The fashion police sentenced me to work in the beehive section of the fashion salon."

"You've still got on a blue sock and a green sock," Charger said. He wondered how her fourth-graders dealt with her high-pitched babbling.

"Do you want a mayonnaise sandwich?" she asked.

"No. Do you eat kid food, being's you're a teacher?"

"I have to have at least a teaspoon of Miracle Whip a day or I'll blow my brains out," she said. "Bill won't eat anything at lunch but crackers. I get mad at him because he won't eat the food I leave for him. He won't eat fruits and vegetables. I said, 'There are some grapes on the counter.' He said, 'Are they washed?' I said no. He said, 'I don't have to wash crackers.' But he's sure slim and trim on the cracker diet. I'll give him that."

"Give that man a Twinkie!" Charger said, jumping off the stool in what he thought was a dramatic gesture. "You don't have to wash Twinkies."

"I don't know if he ought to eat Twinkies."

"Well, if that don't work, give him a Ding Dong." He grinned.

"He's already got a ding-dong."

"Then give him a Little Debbie."

"But I don't want him to have a little Debbie."

Charger laughed. "Little Debbies are my favorite."

"Charger, you're such a great kidder." She laughed with him, shaking her head. "And you're such a baby."

When Charger finally got around to mentioning Paula's Prozac, she didn't seem surprised that he wanted to try the drug.

"I need to reprogram my head," he said.

"Why not go to church? Or take piano lessons?"

"Why don't *you*?"

Paula opened a cabinet above the toaster and chose a vial of pills. "You don't really need these pills, Charger. You just need to believe in yourself more."

"My *self* doesn't have that much to do with it."

"Maybe you just haven't found it yet. You've got a deep soul, Charger. Tiffany doesn't see it yet, but she will, in time."

She shook the pill bottle in his face like a baby rattle. She said, "One of the side effects of these little numbers is that they can make you nonorgasmic. But I've tested that thor-

oughly, and it's not true for me. I don't have that side effect!" She laughed loudly. "I don't think you want one of these, Charger."

"It might be just what I need to relax my sex machine. It's running away with me." He winked.

She turned serious. She put the pills back in the cabinet and said, "Charger, I believe you're scared. You don't act like you're ready to settle down and have a family. Have you given any thought to what you would do if you and Tiffany had a baby?"

"She's not pregnant, is she?" he asked, alarmed.

"Not that I know of. But it's something you have to be ready for."

He *had* thought about it. He wasn't ready for it. The idea was all wrong. Some guys he knew were working hard to feed their kids. They were not much older than he was, but they seemed years older. He couldn't imagine being a father yet. He knew he didn't have much chance of rising above the loading dock, at minimum wage. How could he feed a kid? He tried to shake off the thought. That was the distant future.

CHARGER and Tiffany didn't get away until after eight o'clock that night, after he had changed his oil and worked on his carburetor. They were going to Nashville instead of Atlanta. Tiffany's mother was having a family dinner on Sunday for Tiffany's cousin's birthday, and Tiffany had decided that Atlanta was too far away for them to get back in time. She said she wanted to go to a store in Nashville called Dangerous Threads.

On the drive Charger drank a can of beer. He glanced at Tiffany. She had on her snake pants again. They sort of gave him the creeps. He slid his hand down her thigh. The pants had a slinky, snaky feel that startled him every time he touched them. He moved his hand in little circles over her inner thigh. His hand moved like a computer mouse, tracing the snaky terrain beneath it.

"Do you think I've been acting funny?" Charger asked.

"No. Why?" She was picking at the closure on her bandage. It made a scratchy sound, like an animal in a wall.

"You don't think I'm moody, or liable to jump up and say the wrong thing or throw a flowerpot on the floor? You're not scared to cross the state line with me? You don't think I'm weird?"

"No, I think you're just super-sexy. And you're fun-loving. I rate that real high." Twisting in her seat to reach him, she touched his cheek with her bandaged thumb. It was splinted for protection.

"What do you want to do in Nashville besides shop?" he asked.

"Go to that new mall, and maybe get into a good show at Opryland, and stay in a big hotel."

With her quick enthusiasm, he thought, she was like a child in Santa's lap. "Motel Six is more like it," he said.

"Well, that's all right. I just think we ought to have our fling before we get married and can't run around so much."

Charger was passing a long-haul truck. He returned to the right-hand lane. The truck was far behind, like an image in slow motion. "Let's go to Texas instead of Nashville," he said.

"It's too far. And we're headed in the wrong direction."

"We could drive straight through."

She didn't answer. In a moment she said, "If you're thinking about your daddy, you know you can't find him just by driving to Texas for the weekend."

"I know, but I wish I could." He glanced at the rearview for cops and then chugged some beer. "When Daddy called from Texas last month, I was about two french fries short of happy," he said. "And then the feeling just wound down, and I thought I could sort of see why he did what he did, and I could see me doing it too." He shuddered. "It gives me the bummers."

He was afraid Tiffany wasn't listening. She was pulling at a strand of her hair, twirling it around her finger. But then she said, "I was just thinking about your dad. I was wondering what he was doing out there. And why your mother didn't make more of a fuss about him going off."

"She was probably glad he was gone," Charger said. He belched loudly. "*Irk!*" he said, to be funny. He made her laugh.

They stopped for gas, and then kept driving and driving. They sped past the Cracker Barrel. Usually they stopped there and ate about eight pounds of rosin-roasted potatoes and big slabs of ham. He so often overdid things, he thought sorrowfully. He had gotten his nickname years earlier from his childhood habit of charging into things without thinking. Recently he had dared himself to drive up the bank side of the clay pit; he was trying out his new used truck. The road wound around the clay pit, ascending steeply on one side. The dirt was loose. He wasn't scared. He thought, I can do this. He steered very carefully and inched up the winding trail.

"I can do this," he said now, in a barely audible voice.

Tiffany patted his arm affectionately. She said, "Charger, I know you don't know what you want to do with your life. And you don't make a whole lot. But we have plenty of time. I know we're going to be real happy." She spoke as though she had worked that up in her mind for the past two hours. Then she switched gears again, back to her usual self. She said, "See the moon? I am just thrilled out of my mind to see that moon. I love seeing the moon. I love going to church. I love work. I love driving at night. I love getting sleepy and snuggling up to you."

The moon was rising, a pale disk like a contact lens. The bright lights in the other lane obscured the path in front of

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him. He hit his brights and could see again. The stretch of highway just ahead looked clean and clear. Tiffany made everything seem so simple—like his father bursting into song about sky-watching. Was love that easy?

He ran his hand along her leg, up the inseam. Then he turned on the radio. A song ended, followed by some unidentifiable yapping. He hit the SEEK button. Tiffany screeched. “That’s Andy! Turn it up. I just love that voice of his.”

“Personally, I think he’s full of himself,” Charger said.

“Oh, you just wish *you* could carry a tune.” With her left hand she slapped her leg along with the song.

The singer sounded like a cranky old crow, Charger thought. It was an odd voice for such a young guy. Charger had no special talents. He had never had any encouragement from anybody in his life other than Tiffany. She wanted him to take a computer course, because everything was computers now. But he knew he couldn’t sit still that long. That was the trouble with high school. He liked his present job at the bomb plant okay, because he got to joke around with a bunch of people he enjoyed. He called it “the bomb plant” because it produced fertilizer. He felt lucky to have such an attractive girlfriend. But he was aware that his mother, too, had been cute when she was young. Now she was overweight and had a hacking cough. His father had worked at the tire plant for twenty-five years, and his mother was a nurse’s aide at the hospital. She emptied bedpans. They lived in a tacky, cramped house that she took little pride in. They did not go on vacations. His father watched television every evening. He used to watch a regular lineup. But when they got cable and a remote, he couldn’t stick to his old favorites. He cruised the airwaves, lighting here and there. Five afternoons a week Charger’s mother cooked supper for the family, left it on the table, and went off to work. She grew heavy and tired from being on her feet long hours. She was forty-four years old. Her eyelids drooped, but she didn’t even seem to know it. Maybe when Tiffany was that age, she would accept baggy eyes as gracefully as she accepted her injured thumb. He shuddered.

Driving down the interstate, Charger contemplated his life. He was nineteen years old and still lived with his mother, but already he was thinking ahead to the middle of his life. Since his father disappeared, Charger had been catapulted forward. Something about his mind wouldn’t let him be young, he thought. He saw too far ahead. He wanted to rewire his brain. He wanted to plunge into the darkness and not be afraid. Being in love ought to seem more reckless, he thought. Tiffany was napping, her head nestled in a yellow pillow in the form of a giant Tweety Pie. It did not look like a comfortable position, but she seemed relaxed. Her snake legs were beautiful. They seemed almost to glow in the dark.

When they reached Nashville, Charger impulsively turned down I-40 toward Memphis. He thought Tiffany wouldn’t

mind if they headed west. He felt like driving all night. He thought he could reach the Texas border sometime tomorrow. Then he could get his bearings. Tiffany kept sleeping, tired from school and work. He played the radio low, a background for his thoughts. He finished a Coke he had bought at the gas station. He had to keep his head open for the road. In the dark the road seemed connected to his head, like a tongue.

Just before two he pulled off the interstate at a cheap-looking motel. Tiffany woke up but didn’t seem to notice where



she was. He guided her into the lobby. Clumsily she struggled with her purse and the heavy satchel she had brought with her. Charger pressed a buzzer on the wall to awaken the night clerk. He could hear noises from the back room, like someone swatting flies. Tiffany studied her bandage as they waited at a pine-paneled counter. She squirmed restlessly. “I have to pee so bad,” she said. Charger wondered how she wriggled out of those tight snake pants.

A thin middle-aged man in sweatpants and an oversized Charlotte Hornets jersey appeared. He wore thick glasses. Silently he took Charger’s credit card and ground it through a little press. The man grunted as he presented the paper slip. The room was thirty-two dollars—less than Charger had feared. Pleased, he signed the slip with a grand flourish, as if he were endorsing an important document. The clerk ripped out the yellow copy, wrapped it around the key, and handed the little package to Charger.

“I’m going to get muscles in my left arm,” Tiffany said as

she hoisted her satchel. She held her bandaged thumb ahead of her, like a flashlight.

From the truck Charger retrieved the other bag she had brought and his own bag, a weathered Army duffel of his father's. The room was 234, up an exterior flight of concrete stairs. A light rain had started. Below, a car pulled in, and a woman got out with a screaming child clutching a pink-plush pig. Charger heard a door slam.

The room smelled stale. The bedspread looked heavy and dark with dirt and smoke and spills. Charger set the bags down

and clicked on a light. Then the telephone rang. Tiffany gasped, but Charger thought it seemed normal to get a phone call here. He picked up the phone.

"Your Nellie-babe dropped a scarf on the floor down here," the night clerk said.

"You dropped your scarf," Charger said to Tiffany, who was tugging at her zipper. "I'll be right down," he said to the clerk. He hung up the phone. Nellie-babe?

"Wait. I have to pee and I need a little help with these pants," Tiffany said, reaching for him. "I feel ham-handed."

"You can do it. How did you manage at that gas station?"

"Why I dropped my scarf is, I couldn't tie it around my neck with this clumsy thumb."

"I'll go get it." Charger

slipped out of the room and bounded down to the desk, leaving Tiffany to work herself out of her snake pants. She whined when she was tired.

"Some britches your Nellie's got on," the night clerk said in a friendly voice.

"How am I supposed to take that?" Charger demanded. "And what do you mean—Nellie? Is that something I'm supposed to know from television?"

The skinny guy retreated an inch or two, and his lip quavered. Charger felt gratified. The clerk said, "Hey, man. I didn't mean nothing. I mean you're a lucky guy. No offense. I was just commenting on them snakes." He grinned. He had big teeth, chinked with food. "I mean, I wouldn't want to get tangled up with a lady wearing snakes. I looked at those, and they threw me for a minute. Man, I hate snakes. Did a snake bite her on the finger?"

Charger snatched Tiffany's scarf from the counter. It was a long banner, shimmering blue like a lava lamp. He went to

the door and stood gazing at the parking lot. The winking motel sign had a faulty bulb. DUNN'S MOTEL. DUNN'S MOTE. DUNN'S MOTEL. DUNN'S MOTE. The interstate traffic was sparse, just lights moving like liquid. Charger saw the faint glow of Memphis in the west. He saw a gray car cruise by the motel slowly and then head down the service road. He turned and surveyed the lobby. The TV was blank. The coffee pot was clean and ready for morning. The clerk opened a hot-rodding magazine.

"Can't face them snakes, can you, buddy?" The guy smirked.

"That's none of your business," Charger said, coming back to the counter.

"What's private anymore?" the clerk said, with a burst of bitterness like chewing gum cracking. He set down his magazine and smoothed the cover with his palm, as if he were ironing. "Nothing's a secret. All them numbers we've got nowadays? Why, I could take your credit-card number and use it if I was of a mind to. It's all in the computers anyway. The government knows everything about everybody. It's not enough to take your taxes. They want to keep up with the news on you too. And *we* pay for their meddling. They can peep into them computers and find out anything they want to."

Charger decided to humor the guy. Somehow he didn't want to go back upstairs just yet. "If they're that good, they could find my daddy," he said.

"Is he on the FBI list?" The clerk seemed impressed.

Charger shrugged. "No, he took a wrong turn and he just kept going."

"If they want to find him, they'll get him. They've got their ways. They come in here on stakeouts all the time. Them black helicopters that come over? They have computers right on board that plug into a global network."

"Bullshit," Charger said. "*Irk, irk*," he muttered to himself.

The clerk looked angry, ready to pounce at him. He had a belligerent gleam in his eye. Then he seemed to steady himself. "Matter of fact, right before you came in, I checked in an escaped convict," he said in a superior tone. "He's in the room right next to you."

Charger felt his stomach flip. But he was on to the guy, he thought. He was a fruitcake. More bullshit, Charger decided. He stared the guy in the eye—magnified by the bottle-bottom glasses—until the clerk looked away. "If he's in his room, he won't hurt nobody," Charger said. "He's probably tired. He probably couldn't get a wink of sleep in jail."

The clerk opened a newspaper. "Look at this picture. That's him."

The photograph showed a dark-haired guy with a receding hairline who wore a prison work shirt and had a serial number on his chest. The headline read "PRISON ESCAPEE SOUGHT IN THREE STATES."

"He signed his name 'Harry Martin' when he checked in," the clerk said. "But the guy in the newspaper is named Arthur Shemell. Look." He punched the newspaper with his finger. "Didn't fool me!"

Charger felt his confidence ebb a little. "Well, call the police, then."

"Oh, I don't want to bother them tonight. I've had them out here on so many cases—drug busts and kidnappings. Sometimes they don't appreciate my efforts. I don't owe them any favors." The clerk shook the newspaper.

"I know what you mean," Charger said. "Been there, done that."

"Dittos."

"Been there, done that," Charger repeated, testing the sound.

The clerk folded the newspaper to display the escapee's picture. "I don't believe he's Harry Martin *or* Arthur Shemell. He's the spittin' image of Clarence Smith, this guy back in high school I used to know. He used to sneak into the girls' locker room and steal their basketball bloomers. He had one eyebrow that went all the way across. Them's the guys to watch out for. And their ears stick out too far. His whole family was like that, and they were *all* bad. One time the big daddy busted out of the house with a hatchet and swung it at his uncle's wife's daddy—for no good reason. He split his head right open like a watermelon. That happened half a mile from my house—in 1938."

The clerk rattled the newspaper in Charger's face so quickly that Charger jumped. The guy's own ears were airplane wings, he thought.

"I hear you, buddy," Charger said, trying to calm him. He wasn't afraid of any escaped convict, but the nut behind the counter was a different story. Charger drummed his fingers loudly on the counter. I can do this, he thought.

"Well, if we've got an escaped convict here, we better get the cops on him," Charger said. "Or do you think that would be government interference? Maybe everybody should just go free. Is he a serial killer, or what?"

"Bank robber, gas-station holdup, attacked his brother with a jigsaw, stole a thousand dollars from his sister—her trousseau money. Bad, bad, bad."

Charger breathed once and talked fast. He said, "Hey, man, I'm busy. I've got a girl upstairs about to pee in her pants if I don't get up there. But it looks like we need to call the law on this old pal of yours, whatever his name is." Charger grabbed the portable telephone and dialed 911. Tiffany's scarf fell to the floor.

"You don't need to do that," the clerk said, reaching across the counter.

"Hey," Charger said, "no problem." He trotted a few steps out of reach.

Nine-one-one answered. Charger said, "This is the night

clerk at Dunn's Motel, off of exit forty-eight." He made his voice low and conspiratorial. "We've just checked in that escaped convict that was in the paper. He's your guy, folks. Come on out to our crummy little motel next to the BP off exit forty-eight. I'll hold him for you." He punched the OFF button and returned the phone to the counter with a bang. "It's all yours, buddy. Now I'm going to go get some sleep. Thanks for the opportunity to serve." He picked up the scarf.

The clerk was trembling. "Stay here with me till the cops get here," he said. "Please."

Charger rolled his eyes. "Sorry, buddy. Gotta get back to my Nellie-babe." At the door he said, "So long. If he's really a convict, they'll get him. Be sure to tell about them basketball bloomers."

The clerk stared, bug-eyed.

The blue scarf flying from his fist, Charger ran up the concrete steps like a fugitive. He imagined blue lights flashing in the distance. He heard rain spatters on the asphalt. But he felt a spurt of elation. He plunged into the room and bolted the door.

"What's going on?" Tiffany said. She was standing in the bathroom doorway, holding a towel around her. "I was afraid something had happened to you."

"It's okay. I got your scarf."

Tiffany retreated into the bathroom. Charger turned out the lamp by the chair and then the lamp by the bed. He heard water running in the shower. The bathroom door was ajar, and the crack of light was like a beam from a projection booth. He watched out the window from behind the edge of the drapes. Several minutes passed. Then a cruiser floated in quietly, its roof light making blue patterns on the concrete-block wall in front. Only one cop was in the car. The cop got out slowly, adjusting his heavy belt. Charger could see him and the night clerk in the doorway of the lobby. Their arm gestures seemed to suggest that the two were acquaintances. The cop shook his head knowingly, as though listening to a speeder's excuses. Finally he waved and returned to his cruiser. The night clerk rolled up the newspaper and beat his leg. Charger kept looking, as if something more were supposed to happen.

"Is there some kind of trouble down there?" Tiffany said, moving toward him. She was wrapped in towels. By now the cruiser was gone, and the clerk had retreated into his back room.

"I'll be ready in a minute," Charger said, his voice muffled by the drape.

All he wanted was to get to Texas, Charger thought, to see those skies. He glanced up into the light-shimmering drizzle. If he got an early start on what his father had gone to see, maybe he would not mind what was to come later. It would be a way to fool destiny. "My little donkey and me," he murmured, turning and reaching for her. ☼

Saving The Nation

by VICTOR NAVASKY

The new owner of the financially challenged Nation, a strong liberal voice for 135 years, goes to Harvard Business School looking for a way out of the red

ARTHUR never called before 8:00 A.M. unless something was bothering him or he had some news. It was not quite 7:30, and I was lying in bed, waiting for the alarm to go off in my Cambridge sublet on Memorial Drive, when the phone rang. It was Arthur (Arthur Carter, my friend, boss, and sometimes bane), and this morning something was bothering him or he had some news, depending on how you look at it. How would I like to take over from him as owner of *The Nation*?

I was in Cambridge because after sixteen years as the editor of *The Nation*, America's oldest weekly magazine (it was founded in 1865 by a group of visionaries and malcontents in and around the abolitionist movement), I had persuaded Arthur that I could use a sabbatical. My plan had been to spend six months, starting in January of 1994, as a fellow at the Institute of Politics at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where I would ruminate on the role of the journal of opinion in the post-Cold War world, and then spend the next six months writing. Arthur's call, five months into my year off, changed all that.

This, I quickly figured out, was what is technically known as a wake-up call. Economics is not my strong point, but I did know two things: the magazine was losing \$500,000 a

year; and I didn't have \$500,000 to lose—that year or any year.

"There's no hurry," Arthur said. "Think it over and let me know by the end of the week."

Having done business with Arthur for the past half dozen years, I assumed that this was not an invitation to negotiate. It was more like a take-it-or-leave-it-and-if-you-don't-take-it-by-Friday-(you schmuck)-I-might-well-take-it-off-the-table.

So I took it. Or, rather, I consulted my brother-in-law the lawyer and gulped and took it. Here, as I learned after the lawyers got into the act, was the deal. Arthur wanted a



million dollars for *The Nation* (which seemed to me a little steep, given its balance sheet), but he asked nothing down and proposed a payment schedule of \$100,000 per annum at six percent interest. This, my brother-in-law the lawyer explained to me, was “cheap money.” Furthermore, Arthur’s idea was that I could continue my sabbatical until the end of the year—and although I would sign the papers instant and take on legal responsibility immediately, he would continue as publisher and continue to cover the losses until I took over.

There was still the little matter of how I would explain to my wife, Anne, who lacked her brother the lawyer’s understanding of higher mathematics, that buying a magazine that was losing \$500,000 a year for \$1 million that I didn’t have was a deal worth grabbing by Friday. Especially since I knew that as a genre, journals of opinion almost never make money. Even that avatar of capitalism William F. Buckley Jr., when asked whether his own journal of opinion, *National Review*, might ever make a profit, had responded, “A profit? You don’t expect the church to make a profit, do you?”

But I had an idea. Across the Charles River from the Kennedy School stood the world-famous Harvard Business School, and on its faculty was my friend Samuel L. Hayes III, the Jacob Schiff Professor of Investment Banking. Well, he wasn’t exactly my friend, but we had served on Swarthmore College’s Board of Managers together, where Sam was one of the key managers of the college’s investment portfolio, which that year was the No. 1 performer in the country. I told Sam that I might have the chance to acquire *The Nation*, and I explained my idea over baked scrod at the business school’s faculty club. Suppose I opened *The Nation*’s books to a class of Harvard’s brilliant young M.B.A. candidates. Was there a way that they could turn our little company into one of those famous case studies? The job would be simple but challenging: How to take a magazine that has lost money for 130-odd years and, without changing the magazine, turn around its economics.

Sam gently reminded me that although he didn’t see *The Nation* regularly (or irregularly, for that matter), he suspected that his Republican politics were not exactly *Nation* politics. But he said he would think about it, and that I should send him my “financials.” I signed with Arthur, and not long after, I sent Sam the numbers, along with a business plan I had worked up. He said he would let me know.

Although I had confidence in the modest projections I had developed with the help of an old friend, Jim Kobak, a leading consultant to the publishing industry (they showed us passing the break-even point four years down the road, and they called for an investment of at least \$3 million), I feared that Sam, who sat on the board of Tiffany’s, might prefer more-ambitious projections.

So when, some months later, Sam and I had our follow-up lunch, it was with surprise that I received his news that Harvard was going to help us become a capitalist success story.

Sam had “run” our numbers and was impressed that the ac-

tor Paul Newman had agreed to invest in our cause (I emphasize the “cause” here; the proprietor of Newman’s Own salsa, spaghetti sauces, salad dressings, and lemonade knew more about business than I did, and he had few illusions about *The Nation* as a business proposition). Sam thought that *The Nation* might make a fascinating case study—not for the M.B.A. program but, rather, for a special course given for owners, presidents, and CEOs of companies with annual sales ranging from several million to several hundred million dollars. This is the Owner/President/Management Program (OPM), whose initials coincidentally also stand for “other people’s money” (an apt acronym, it seemed to me, since the course—which is offered in three units of three weeks each over a three-year period, to accommodate the busy schedules of its students—cost an astronomical \$12,000 a year).

Sam described the kinds of students (whom I immediately began to think of as unpaid consultants) that OPM tends to attract: self-made entrepreneurs who have had a successful business idea and now want to learn how to run the business; sons and daughters who went into the family business and now want to professionalize it; folks catapulted from middle management to the top of their companies; and foreign entrepreneurs who want to see how the Americans do it. The course is taught by the case-study, or “learning by analogy,” method, and *The Nation* could be one of the cases. Sam explained that although the raw IQ scores of the M.B.A. candidates might be higher, the OPMers were livelier, cockier, and, because of their varied experience, in a unique position to make informed, creative, and perhaps even constructive suggestions. I would be invited on the day *The Nation* came up for discussion—not quite what I had had in mind, but not bad.

Sam proceeded to explain that OPM has three phases. Unit I deals with management skills, Unit II with profitability and growth, and Unit III with harvesting the wealth that OPMers have learned how to maximize in Unit II. He thought *The Nation* might fit nicely in Unit II. Then a diabolical smile crept over his face, and his eyes narrowed. “You know,” he said, “we can do the case study, but whether or not we do it, you might want to take this course yourself.” Only good breeding, one assumes, kept him from adding, “You don’t know what you’re doing.”

There was, of course, no way I could or should take this course. My sabbatical had kept me away from the office for too long as it was. Although by the standards of our slice of the industry I had had some fundraising success, I had put together only a third of the capital I believed we would need. My essential fundraising strategy was to raise half the \$3 million from a small group of large investors, and the other half from a large group of small investors (we were looking for a Circle of 100 to commit \$5,000 a year for three years), and that would be labor-intensive work. Moreover, the magazine continued to lose around \$50,000 a month. We were changing printers, redesigning, and computerizing all at the same

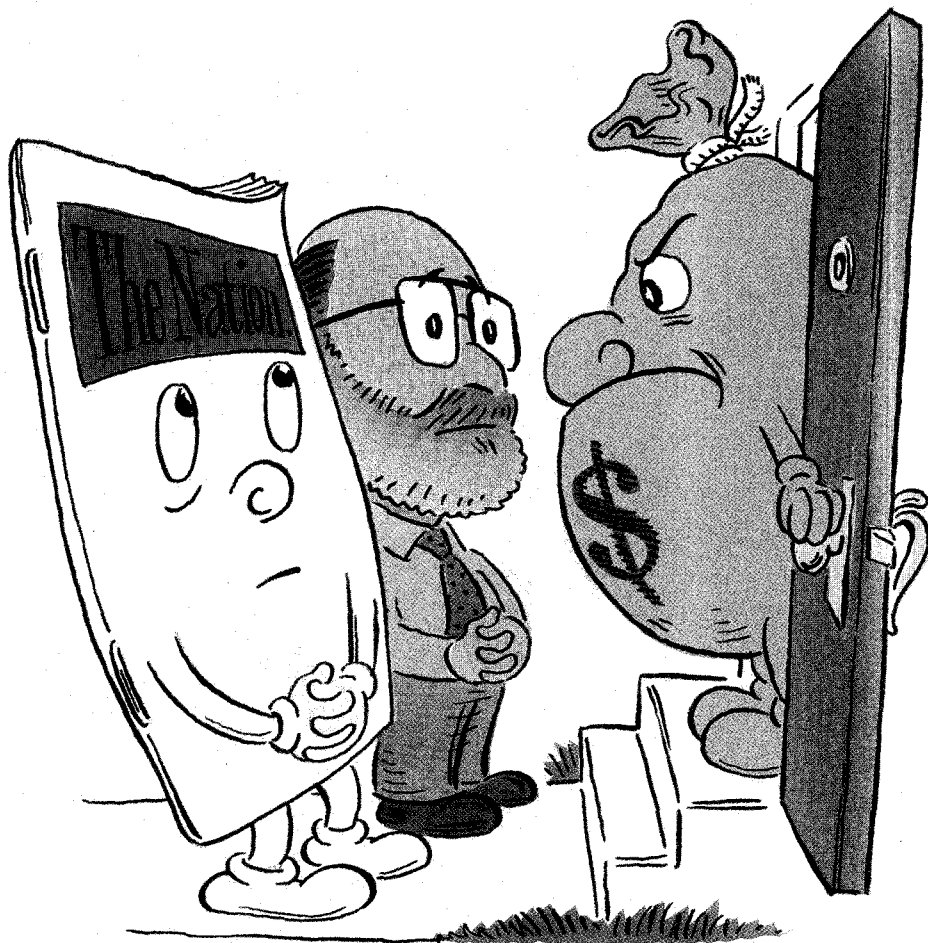
time: a triple trauma. Our union contract had run out, and renegotiation time was upon us. The course tuition was unaffordable. And besides, even if I wanted to go, there was still the minor matter of admission: the deadline for application had passed. So, naturally, I applied.

As I was subsequently to learn, a balance sheet has two sides, and Sam, who served as a reference and used his pull to get the deadline extended, was right. Essentially I was an immigrant in the land of high finance. Here, at a minimum, was a chance to learn the language—how to read balance sheets, keep track of cash flow, talk to potential investors, find out what “good will” really meant, master such tools of business analysis

as price-earnings and other ratios, become an effective manager, and all the rest. Besides, I had a daughter living in Cambridge, and maybe it was a good omen that I was looking to recruit a Circle of 100 and OPM that year had 101 students, not including me. Perhaps some of my self-made multimillionaire classmates would see the virtue of investing in a business with a mission (once I learned how to write a mission statement). Indeed, if I averaged only one new Circle member a year, I would cover my costs and then some.

ON a windy Sunday in early March, along with fellow OPMers from eighteen countries, I arrived at George Baker Hall in time to be shown to my monastic dormitory room. (We had been told to leave our spouses behind, because this was to be a “total immersion” experience. A honeymooning classmate took this injunction so seriously that he left his bride in California.) It included a single bed, one window, a computer, a clock radio, a small bathroom, and no mini-bar but a narrow shelf fully stocked with case studies in five subject areas—financial management, general management, human aspects of business, accounting and control, marketing strategy—and an “HBS Executive Education” book bag in which to carry them.

I put on the name tag each of us was required to wear at all times and joined the welcoming cocktail party in the Baker Lounge, below, with only mild trepidation. It seemed to me auspicious that the first person I met—who was clad in a University of Florida basketball jacket—was Nathan S.



Collier. When Nathan, who has an open, friendly smile and tousled blond hair, found out what I did, he told me that his granduncle had founded the late *Collier's* magazine, although he himself was in what he called the apartment-ownership-management business.

In fact, after the second—or was it the third?—vodka on the rocks, I concluded that a surprising number of my new classmates might see the business potential in America's oldest weekly magazine if they were only given a fair chance. Besides Nathan, there was Richard Elden, a Chicago-based investment manager who manages \$2 billion. He told me that he had started out as an International News Service reporter, and that on the side he had recently helped to found a small company that hired investigative journalists to prepare in-depth reports on targeted industries and corporations.

And there was David Karam, the president of an Ohio company that owns and operates seventy-five Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburger franchises. He told me his Lebanese father would be thrilled to know that his son had a classmate whose magazine, *The Nation*, had been the first to publish his personal hero, Ralph Nader, also of Lebanese extraction.

There were many more prospects, but here I'll mention only Maximiano A. (Max) Goncalves, the president and chief executive officer of Fenasoftware, located in São Paulo, Brazil, which produces the largest computer show on the planet. He said he had a particular interest in U.S. journalists, and could we have dinner to talk about it?

Clearly, I had more in common with my fellow business-

men (I now for the first time began to think of myself as a businessman) than I had anticipated, and I could hardly wait for the next day's program to begin. As it turned out, I didn't have to wait long. I had set my clock radio for 6:30 A.M., so that I'd be up for my 7:00 continental buffet breakfast in the Baker Lounge and still have time to scan the papers that OPM provided gratis—the *Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* among them—before the morning study group to which I had been assigned convened, at 7:45. Fortunately for my study habits the clock radio in the room next door sounded off at 5:30, as it would every day of the course, which gave me an extra hour to read and reread my cases.

Over our course of study we read and discussed something like 150 cases, so it doesn't surprise me that I don't remember which case it was that Professor Norman Berg, who headed up OPM, taught in his opening 9:00 A.M. class on general management. But I should have seen the handwriting on the wall, even if it was disguised as chalk marks on the electronically manipulated blackboard that he kept sending up and down like an elevator. Norm had asked the class to list the pros and cons confronting the company under consideration. A forest of hands went up, and we had our first con. The company had a union. What could be worse than that? Norm wrote "UNION" in big letters at the head of the con column, underlined it three

times, and chalked in an exclamation point for good measure.

I got a big laugh and a lot of little snickers when I mentioned that unions can increase productivity. I should have realized then and there that I'd have to come to terms with a basic question: Did I want to spend my valuable classroom hours scoring political points against my (mostly) free-market-teer classmates; or did I want to concentrate my energies on learning how to bring *The Nation* to the break-even point?

Actually, it was a little more complicated than that. In my view, *The Nation*, with its pitifully small circulation (20,000 in 1978; 85,000 in 1994; now about 100,000), had survived all these years (while magazines with circulations in the millions—*Collier's*, *Look*, and all the rest—had gone under) because it was more a cause than a business. The only reason *The Nation* had not been organized as a nonprofit (which would entitle donors to all sorts of tax breaks and the magazine to lower mailing rates) is that nonprofits can't endorse candidates for political office or devote more than a small percentage of their resources to trying to influence legislation; and we didn't like the idea of leaving the tax status of our subversive weekly vulnerable to challenge by hostile Administrations.

Though I had signed on with OPM to learn to think like a businessman, I was not ready to abandon *The Nation's* tradition of dissent—its anti-business bias, if you will. (And, of course, it would have been bad for business.)

Case after case seemed to underline my dilemma. I remember the day OPM took up Wal-Mart. It was just after 3:00 P.M., and class was out, but the conversation flowed on. I was on the Harvard bridge, headed across the Charles to Cambridge. On my left Pedro Salles, who runs the fourth largest bank in Brazil, was zipping along in the electric wheelchair that took him from class to class. On my right was Tim Erdman, the chairman, president, and CEO of this country's oldest and largest designer-builder specializing in outpatient medical facilities. Tim, in his late forties, was on Rollerblades. I was in the center, huffing and puffing and not quite keeping up. Our destination was Cybersmith, a store that featured the latest in technology before it became generally available. But what really seemed to propel my fellow OPMers was the inspiring tale of Sam Walton, a JCPenney trainee who had had the idea of building discount department stores in small towns across the country which would all operate on small profit margins, and who converted this "niche marketing" concept, as they liked to call it, into one of the greatest business successes of all time. When he died, *The New York Times* put his family fortune at \$23.5 billion, but the professor suggested that Walton was the kind of guy who would have cared more about the Wal-Mart cashier who had \$262,000 in her retirement account after working for the company for twenty-four years.

I pondered whether to mention the *Nation* article, published the previous year, that had portrayed Sam Walton as

NO RETURN

I like divorce. I love to compose
letters of resignation; now and then
I send one in and leave in a lemon-
hued Huff or a Snit with four on the floor.
Do you like the scent of a hollyhock?
To each his own. I love a burning bridge.

I like to watch the small boat go over
the falls—it swirls in a circle
like a dog coiling for sleep, and its frail bow
pokes blindly out over the falls' lip
a little and a little more and then
too much, and then the boat's nose dives and butt

flips up so that the boat points doomily
down and the screams of the soon-to-be-dead
last longer by echo than the screamers do.
Let's go to the videotape, the news-
caster intones, and the control room does,
and the boat explodes again and again.

—WILLIAM MATTHEWS

the main threat to Main Street USA, the man responsible more than any other for the malling of America, for the destruction of community upon community. But before I could decide, we had arrived at Cybersmith, I was out of breath, and why spoil a good party?

By the time we considered the case of Cash America, however, I was less reticent. As it happened, that morning I was the leader (owing to daily rotation) of my 7:45 A.M. study group, and since I was up at 5:30, I had plenty of time to prepare. Cash America made its money from a chain of pawnshops, charging steep rates of interest. A prime purpose of the case was to assess the CEO's new strategy of attempting to destigmatize pawnbroking and simultaneously change what HBS likes to call "the value equation." Instead of lending as little as possible on collateral and selling it for as high a price as possible if it was forfeited, his revolutionary idea was to lend as much as possible and sell as inexpensively as he could, on the theory that he could make up in volume (from repeat customers, who were the most profitable) what he lost on the margins.

When I reported that according to a forthcoming *Nation* article (called "Cashing In on Poverty"), Cash America's typical loan rate hovered around 200 percent, I naively assumed that we would have an interesting dialogue on the morality of the pawnbroking business, especially given the *Nation* writer's assumption that it was immoral to exploit the poor merely to increase return on investment ("ROI,"

I had learned to call it) for the rich. Instead the study group immediately divided into those who believed that the poor were deadbeats who deserved what they got and those who felt that Cash America was providing the uncreditworthy poor a valuable service—let the market decide!

The bottom line of the HBS/OPM mentality—surprise, surprise—seemed to be that the bottom line is the bottom line. One morning in Professor Ben Shapiro's marketing-strategy class we were discussing the marketing of a product subject to government regulation. Spotting David Karam's hand in the air, Ben made a beeline in his direction and asked whether he thought the regulation was appropriate. "It

all depends on whether you believe Adam Smith or Karl Marx," David said. "Do you mean to tell me," the consternated professor shouted, "that this case has something to do with *communism*?" He then turned, looked at me across the room, and said with a sweet smile, "Sorry, Vic."

I DIDN'T mind my status as class foil. And although we had our disagreements, my classmates and I gradually developed mutual respect. When Dan Roche absented himself from class during Unit II for all of two days and returned \$36 million richer, having sold his software business, I enthusiastically joined in the applause despite my by now well-known antipathy toward corporate takeovers. When a



small-town banker commiserated with another classmate, saying, "You're in a family business? I wouldn't wish that on anybody," my heart went out to both of them.

Note from my learning journal (we were instructed to make entries after each class about how the case applied to our own companies):

Everyone gets a great kick out of Sam Hayes's favorite trick—to dramatize the principle that financial leverage always involves risk, he spreads his arms like an acrobat attempting to keep his balance and then tiptoes out on what he calls 'the debt limb.' He explains that his financially conservative wife, Barbara, who disapproves of going into

debt, 'hugs the trunk,' whereas he is generally inclined to go as far out on the limb as financial prudence permits. Today he is out 'on the twigs.' My problem is that every time Sam does his balancing number, it reminds me of my own delicate balancing act—the attempt to absorb HBS know-how without succumbing to HBS values. I am persuaded that if the HBS faculty ran the world, it would be a better place—that is, a more humane and efficient version of the status quo. But what attracted me to *The Nation* in the first place was its commitment to challenge the status quo. I'm not sure what this says about the idea that it is possible to apply the lessons of the typical HBS case to a company like *The Nation*.

I did my nightly homework and read all about MBO (Management by Objective), MBWA (Management by Walking Around), TQM (Total Quality Management), the New Intimacy (a catchphrase to describe the relationship between customers and vendors), the Price Performance Curve, the Value Chain, the Magic Matrix, the Order Cycle, Market Segmentation, and Market Share (said to be the management mantra of the 1980s—this decade it's the New Economics of Service). I kept in mind Professor Shapiro's maxim "There is only one reason to lose a good customer and that's death. His!" But I still had a lot of trouble analogizing case studies of Steinway pianos, Southwest Airlines, Mrs. Fields Cookies, and such to my venerable company.

This was partly because of *The Nation's* status as a non-profit sheep in for-profit wolf's clothing, but also because my *Nation* self still tended to regard the profit motive as avaricious indifference to social consequences, while OPMers saw it as the key to business success. Not that my classmates were against doing good—they were all for it. Well, most of them were for it, but that had to do with the Service-Profit Chain (treat employees well and they will treat customers well). Even language compounded the problem. At OPM "downsizing" was a synonym for efficiency and savings, whereas at *The Nation* it signifies misery and unemployment. A word like "empowerment" in *The Nation's* pages means granting the disenfranchised and the dispossessed more say over their destiny; at OPM it meant getting rid of middle management.

And then one day we took up the case of L. L. Bean, and I decided that maybe there was something to this learning by analogy after all. What impressed me about L. L. Bean, founded in 1912, was not the innovative systems that were the ostensible focus of the case but, rather, that the company's founder, against advice, had stuck to his idiosyncratic ways. And I said so.

To this day an L. L. Bean customer can return a product at any time, day or night, and get, at his or her option, a replacement, a refund, or a credit. If a customer returns a pair of boots after ten years, the company will replace them, no questions asked. This seemed to me a tribute to the maverick who started the business in his brother's basement, in Free-

port, Maine (which is how it came to be open twenty-four hours a day). He sold his first hunting boots (based on rubbers his wife bought him, with leather tops stitched by a local cobbler) to friends and relatives (hence the no-questions-asked returns policy), and then refused to automate or adopt any of the efficiency measures advocated by his financially ambitious grandson.

When asked to put a value on the company, whose sales in 1965, the date of the case, were \$3 million a year, classmates—especially the contingent from Latin America—expressed skepticism about the old man's unwillingness to move into the modern era. At this point Philip Adkins, a London-based investment banker who owns the J. Boag & Son brewery in Tasmania and who had arranged the financing for a Disney theme park in Japan, piped up. Philip said, "I agree with Vic. This image of Emersonian self-reliance adds untold value to the Bean brand name." Philip's estimate of the company's value was ten times as high as anyone else's. The professor ended the class by reporting on the current market value of L. L. Bean stock—more than a billion dollars.

At lunch I asked Philip whether he thought there was an analogy between the "brand recognition" of *The Nation*—which, after all, had a 135-year-old reputation for its non-conformist politics—and L. L. Bean. Yes, he said; in fact, as he thought about the worldwide possibilities for exploiting *The Nation's* "brand name" in the new electronic media, he decided that I was "sitting on a gold mine."

I generously offered to share with him my prospectus for the gold mine. He said he would review it with interest and asked me whether I knew that when Rupert Murdoch bought *The Times* of London, the first thing he did was to enter on its balance sheet a good-will item of as much as \$50 million. When his solicitors said he couldn't do that, Murdoch asked, Why not? Why do you think I paid \$27 million for it? For its printing plant? I'm shutting that down. For its staff? I'm getting rid of half of them. Talent is for hire. I bought it for its name. I own *The Times* of London.

Philip had all sorts of ideas about what I might do with *The Nation's* name, not to mention its balance sheet, pointing out that a good-will item of \$10 million for the name (more than three times what I had listed) would impress potential investors. He said that he, at any rate, was impressed, and that I should consider him a potential investor. (True to his word, by the way, he's still a potential investor.)

Of course, the big day for me was the last day of Unit II, when the *Nation* case was on the agenda.

Aside from my strategy of importing my wife, Anne, to sit by my side as a buffer against those classmates who tended to see visiting CEOs as an occasion for target practice, the class began like any other. "If you were the CFO of another magazine," Sam asked as his opening question, "what are the financial dimensions you would be looking for on a

day-to-day basis?" He drew from the class the difference between *The Nation's* fixed costs and its variable costs. He had the class inventory our assets—intellectual as well as physical—and then diplomatically observed, "In terms of the balance sheet, this is not an asset-intensive business." I nudged Anne when Sam described the Carter note as "a very friendly arrangement." Perhaps I was not such a dummy after all.

But just a minute—there were not enough assets to cover obligations. How would the balance sheet handle that? As he referred the class to the good-will item on the balance sheet, Sam asked, "What is the kernel of value inside the husk?" Philip Adkins could have told him, but Philip had dropped out of Unit II for personal reasons. Sam called on Mitch Dong, who had been waving his hand for some time now, as was his wont. Mitch lived in Boston and embodied the entrepreneurial spirit that OPM did its best to cultivate. He had merged his environmental company with a publicly traded company, sold his interest a year later, and started a hedge fund that trades gold equities based on esoteric statistical models, all of which enables him and his family to alternate vacations between a boat in the Galapagos and a villa in Tuscany.

Mitch didn't have the answer to Sam's question, but he did, he said, have the solution to my problem. As he saw it, I had it made. *The Nation* had a \$1 million sweetheart loan from its former publisher. It had a subscription list now approaching 100,000 names, worth \$10 to \$20 a name in the marketplace—maybe as much as \$2 million. And it was bleeding \$50,000 a month.

His solution: Kill *The Nation*. "That way," he happily explained, "you cut your losses to zero. You sell the subscription list to JFK Jr.—he's started a new political magazine, hasn't he? And with the two million dollars you get from the sale you buy long-term Treasury notes, which pay seven and a half percent interest [this was 1996, remember]. And you use the difference between the seven and a half percent you receive and the six percent you owe to settle your obligations, your severance payments, and your accounts payable. And on the difference you retire to the Galapagos, sipping piña coladas. If you get bored, Machu Picchu is right next door."



Lots of other ideas were generously offered. Carlos Adamo, an Argentine banker, said we should raise the subscription price: we had loyal customers and nothing to lose. Chris Bergen, who with his wife runs a pharmaceutical-testing company, thought we should consider going biweekly. Sam proposed that we find a way to segment the market—charging more for those willing to pay more. I liked Sam's idea, not least because it reminded me of a doctrine I had studied way back in a political-theory seminar at Swarthmore: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."

ON March 21, 1997, Tom Potter, the managing director of Eagles Boys Dial-a-Pizza, in Queensland, Australia, who had never been to college, gave the graduation speech and got his Harvard diploma (so it was a certificate—big deal), along with the rest of us.

As I sat there listening to Tom, I did a reckoning of my OPM experience.

The Nation has not yet passed the break-even point, and if I don't take up Mitch's proposal to kill the magazine, perhaps it will be a while before we turn a profit, but OPM was not a total loss. I failed to enlist any of my classmates as *Nation* shareholders, but . . .

I went to Harvard thinking that ROE was *Roe v. Wade*. Now I know it is Return on Equity.

I went to Harvard thinking that the year was divided into seasons. Now I know it is divided into quarters.

I went to Harvard not knowing the difference between the

quick ratio and the acid-test ratio, and now I know they are the same thing (the sum of cash, current marketable securities, and receivables, divided by current liabilities—so there).

Finally, I went to Harvard believing that I was a buffalo and came back hoping I could become a goose. Let me explain. Prior to OPM I had assumed that in my new role as the company's leader my job would be to lead. Then, in Unit III, I read a book called *Flight of the Buffalo*, which summarized what I had already begun to gather from my more enlightened classmates—that a good business doesn't function like a herd of buffalo, with loyal followers doing what the lead buffalo wants them to do, going where the leader wants them to go. (That's how the early settlers were able to decimate the buffalo herds. They'd kill the lead buffalo. Then, while the rest of the herd stood around waiting for the leader, the settlers slaughtered them, too.) What a business really needs, the book said, is not buffalo but responsible independent workers, like a flock of geese, who fly as a team in a V formation, the leadership changing all the time.

By the time we graduated, Nathan Collier, who was forty-five, and I had become good friends, and he shared with me his ambition. "It has three elements. I want to earn my first billion by the time I'm sixty. I want to have a helluva good time getting there. And if I can help mankind a little along the way, so much the better."

And indeed, I learned from the OPM bulletin board that between Unit I and Unit II, Nathan had made a \$10 million bequest in the form of adjacent property to his alma mater, the University of Florida at Gainesville. He also took out a one-year subscription to *The Nation*.

I count David Karam among my new friends too, although his father's admiration for Ralph Nader was put in perspective on the last day of class, when David made a rousing speech denouncing unions to enthusiastic applause. I also discovered that David, who has a formidable intellect, is a member of the libertarian-conservative Cato Institute, and hopes down the road to run for high political office on what I suspect will be an anti-government, anti-union platform. Early on I crossed David off my list of potential *Nation* shareholders, but I was moved when one day he articulated his business philosophy: "To provide a high-quality product and service, to make a fair profit, and to improve the lives of our employees." If he does run for the Senate, I'll probably disagree with 90 percent of his platform and send him a campaign contribution.

When Richard Elden invited me to dinner, I thought at first that it might be the moment to make my subtle pitch. I would tell him about the good luck I was having rounding up my Circle of 100. But before I got to it, he told me about the good luck he had had rounding up a Circle of Four or Five for his investigative-reporting enterprise. We still get together when we are visiting each other's cities, and maybe if I ever make a financial success of *The Nation*, he will let me buy into his business with my profits.

Max Goncalves's interest in American journalists turned out to be an interest in recruiting five of them to serve as journalist-judges for his high-tech expo in São Paulo. Happily for me, I turned out to be one of them, despite the fact that, as I made clear, I spoke neither Portuguese nor computerese. Our job was to give a "Max" Award to "the most innovative exhibit of Brazilian computer technology that has the best potential for export sales." As it turned out, my contribution was to add an additional criterion—social benefit. And I guess that if we ever put out a Portuguese edition, Max might want to subscribe.

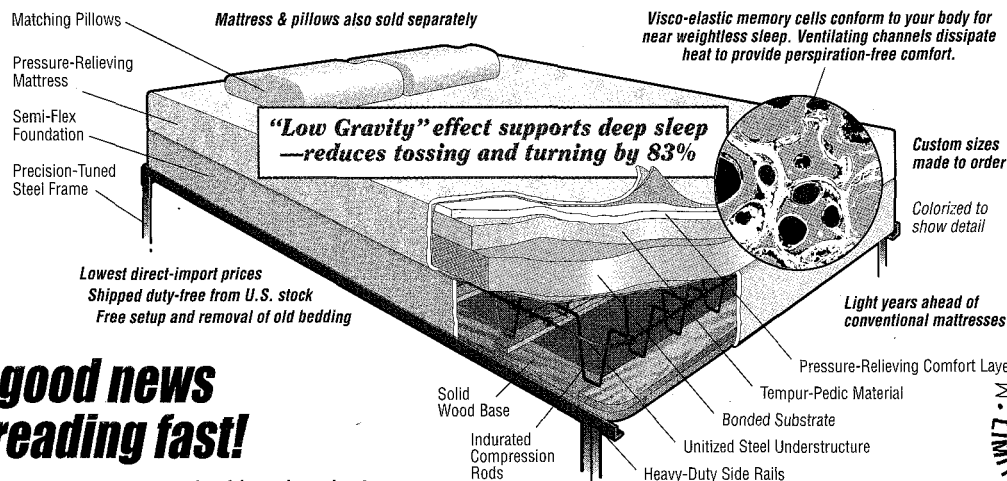
Actually, I did come back with some Circle members from the Cambridge area—none of them OPMers, but more than enough to cover my tuition. And OPMers did account for twelve new *Nation* subscriptions. As an unexpected bonus, when Peter Norton, who created Norton Utilities and, with Paul Newman, is one of *The Nation*'s principal shareholders, discovered that I had enrolled in OPM, he told me that he, too, had attended the program. He said, "I was in hog heaven. Until then I had never had a male bonding experience, and in terms of intellectual challenge it's one of the highlights of my life." By the time I graduated, Peter had significantly increased his *Nation* investment. Call it the old school tie.

On my return to the office our associate publisher asked me to give an example of what I had learned at Harvard, and I told her. Before OPM if a subscriber wrote in to cancel his or her subscription, the loss of the \$48 never really bothered me. I agreed with the late *Nation* editor and owner, Oswald Garrison Villard, who said, "If I don't get my requisite share of cancellations every week, I fear my editorial hand must be slipping." But I did hate to lose an old friend, so I'd send a note asking, Are you sure you really want to do that? About half of them were so thrilled to get a personal note from the editor that they would agree to stay on board.

Having been exposed to nine weeks of Ben Shapiro, who among other things introduced me to the concept of "the lifetime value of the customer," I now have a whole new calculus when I get a cancellation: Subscribers who have been with us four years or more renew at an average rate of 80 percent. The average age of our subscriber is 47.5 years. The average life expectancy of a 47.5-year-old is 31.6 years. So instead of saving the magazine \$48 by preventing a cancellation, I am saving 80 percent of \$48 times 31.6, and when one factors in the fact that 15 percent of our subscribers send gift subscriptions and extra money, and so forth, it's clear that the "value" of a *Nation* subscriber is well over \$1,000 rather than a mere \$48. You get the idea. When I explained all this to our associate publisher, she nodded and smiled and was obviously impressed, and then she asked, So what can we do about it? Well, I said, we can write a letter to anyone who tries to cancel and explain why he or she shouldn't. But you already do that, she pointed out. Yes—but as Sam implied at the outset, I didn't know what I was doing. ☼

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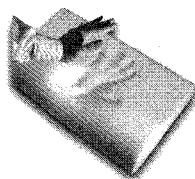
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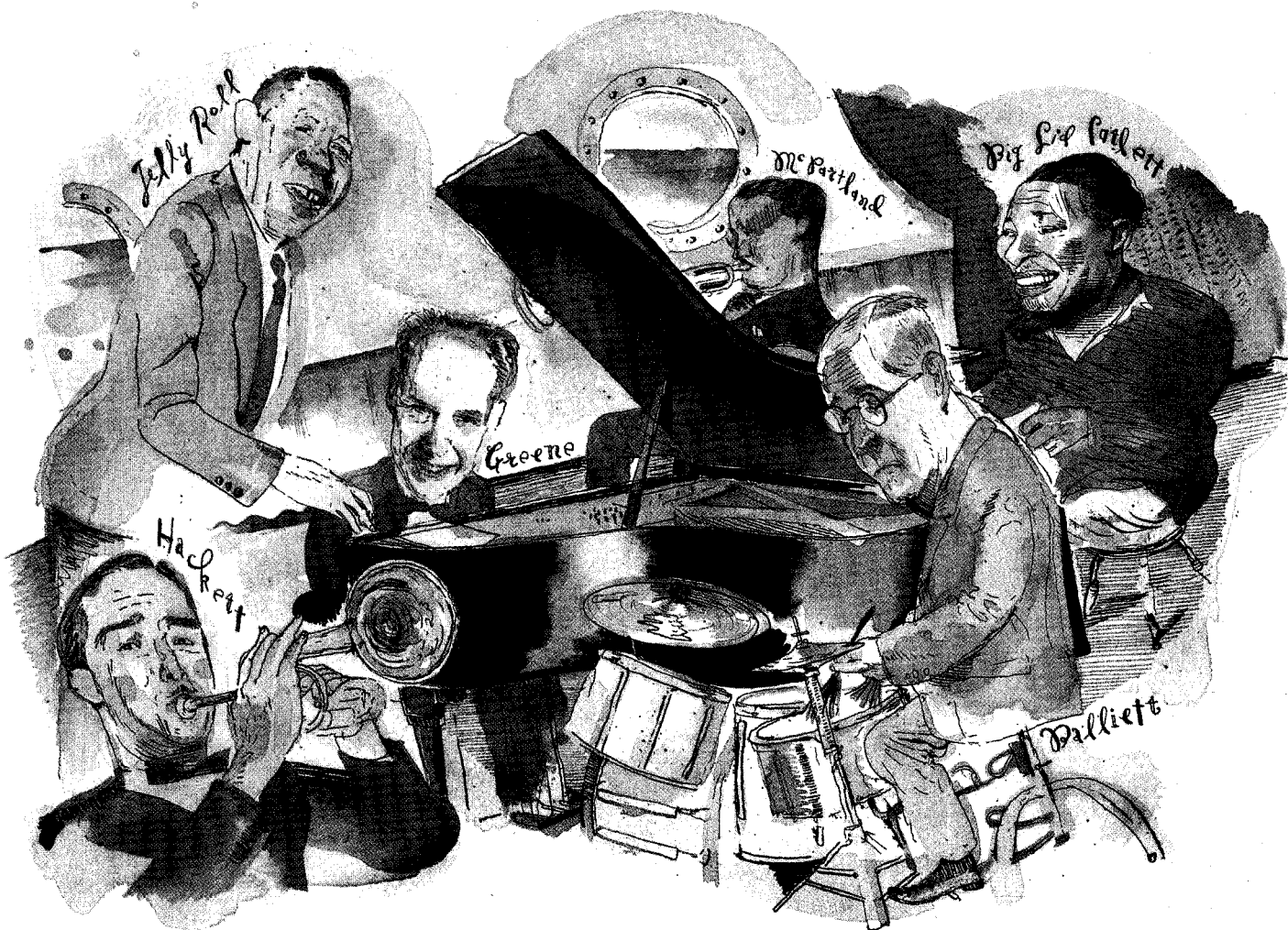
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Sitting In

A jazz writer and amateur drummer turns temporarily pro on the QE2

NOT long ago I went on a ten-day jazz cruise to the Caribbean on the *Queen Elizabeth II*. I had been on half a dozen jazz cruises on other ships, always as a critic.

This time I went as a musician—a drummer.

by Whitney Balliett

I wanted to test Kenneth Tynan's famous aphorism "A critic is a man who knows the way but can't drive the car." I wanted to find out, once and for all, if I could drive the car.

My erratic noncareer as a drummer began in 1942, when I was going on sixteen. I was a freshman at Phillips Exeter Academy, and had been working blindly toward jazz by way of the jazz-flavored

dance bands of Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw and Harry James. During my first Christmas vacation I was taken to one of Milt Gabler's Sunday-afternoon jam sessions at Jimmy

Ryan's, on West Fifty-second Street,

in New York. They weren't really jam sessions except for the closing number, a fast "Bugle Call Rag," in which all the musicians from the two alternating bands Gabler had hired got up on the tiny bandstand and let go. There might be three or four trumpets, several reeds, a couple of trombones, and a four-man rhythm section; the number, with its many breaks, would become a "cutting"

contest, in which the trumpets in particular tried to shout one another. It was the first head-on live jazz I had heard, and it was shocking and exhilarating. The famous old New Orleans drummer Zutty Singleton was hypnotic. He moved his head to the rhythm in peculiar ducking motions, shot his hands at his cymbals as if he were shooting his cuffs, hit stunning rim shots, and made fearsome, inscrutable faces, his eyelids flickering like heat lightning.

Back at school I started trying to play drums, to be Zutty Singleton. In fact, several of us, through some accidental shared chemistry, started playing together: two trumpeters, a clarinetist, a pianist, and I. We played in the basement of Phillips Church, which was honeycombed with soundproof practice rooms, one of them big enough for a dozen or more musicians. In the instrument room I found a snare drum with a hole in it, a small cymbal, and a bass drum. We taught ourselves a kind of baggy Dixieland, and by the end of the year we could play recognizable ver-

sions of "Tin Roof Blues" and "Shine On Harvest Moon." We gained momentum, and musicians, the following fall. We had jam sessions in the church basement, and on a dance weekend Mary Ellin Berlin (now Barrett), the daughter of Irving Berlin, sat in on our out-of-tune upright and played thunderous boogie-woogie.

In the spring we played a short set before the Saturday-night movie in the gym for an audience of some 800 students and faculty members. The closer was "Bugle Call Rag," and it featured a drum solo. Driven largely by fright, I had the sensation that I was getting faster and faster—that I had become possessed and would never be able to stop. But, like all drum solos, this one got a big hand. We also provided seating music for the annual school musical. As we were about to go into "Blue Skies," which we had just learned, Doc Perry—Lewis Perry, the gray, godlike headmaster of the academy, who made it a seignorial habit to interview every boy briefly once a year ("How are you, Balliett? Are you doing well in your work? Are you happy at Exeter?")—got up from his seat on the far side of the auditorium, bore down on the band, stopped, and, leaning over, said in my ear, "Take that disgusting chewing gum out of your mouth." Red-faced and rattled, I did, fastening it to the underside of my bass-drum rim. (Gene Krupa had made it *de rigueur* for drummers to chew gum while playing.)

By 1944 I had enough confidence in my playing to make a fool of myself. One summer night I went with friends to the Three Deuces, on Fifty-second Street, to hear Big Sid Catlett's quartet. The master of all jazz drummers, Catlett had become my god. Six foot three, he had enormous, magical hands, impeccable taste, time, and technique, and had played with everyone from Jelly Roll Morton to Charlie Parker, effortlessly buoying them all. His quartet at the Three Deuces included Ben Webster on tenor saxophone, Marlowe Morris on piano, and John Simmons on bass. In the first set Webster, standing stock-still and holding his tenor straight up and down in front of him as if he were a flag bearer, got off beauty after beauty, while Catlett, tending him at every turn, alternated miraculous four-bar breaks with a cou-

ple of short, intricately simple solos. In a kind of imitative madness I got up at the end of the set and asked Catlett if I could sit in on his drums with the intermission group, the Loumell Morgan trio. Morgan was a pianist, and, as was the fashion, often played standing up. Catlett made a face, said, "Don't break anything, boy," and sat down behind me. Morgan—out to test this whitey—went into "Mop Mop," a riff number based on "I Got Rhythm." He set a tempo so fast it would have taxed Catlett. I was left behind by the time we reached the first bridge, and that's all I remember. I don't know whether I tried to finish the set or got down from the bandstand and left. I do remember Catlett's drums, though: his tom-toms packed tight around his snare, his cymbals in an easy ring just beyond—a small house for such a big man.

I was drafted in 1946, after my first term in college; I graduated eventually and didn't play much until the late fifties, when I bought the drums I have now. For a time I was part of a floating band that started out in the harpist Daphne Hellman's New York living room and then moved from loft to loft. It included mainly *New Yorker* people—Wally White (piano), Paul Brodeur (clarinet), Donald Reilly (trombone), Warren Miller (trumpet), Lee Lorenz (trumpet)—augmented occasionally by full-time pros, such as the pianist Dick Wellstood and the bassist Hayes Alvis. Since then, more by accident than by design, I have sat in with some noble musicians, among them Marian McPartland, Jimmy McPartland ("Hey, you sound like Davy Tough"), Gene Bertocini, Michael Moore, Dave McKenna, Bobby Hackett, Eddie Heywood, Maxine Sullivan, and Teddi King. I sat in with McKenna and Hackett at the Columns, on Cape Cod, and when Hackett, a man of inestimable humor, began telling McKenna a joke during one of his solos, I lost my way. Hackett leaned over and said in his gravelly Providence accent, "Hey, Whit, you're on one and three." (Jazz musicians of the older schools accent the second and fourth beats of the bar.) One New Year's Eve in the early seventies I played with Heywood and Marian McPartland at the Cookery, on University Place at Eighth Street, and when I went back to the table

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where my wife was sitting with Popsie Whitaker, the great *New Yorker* editor and wit, he said in his nasal twang, "We wondered where you were."

NOT long before I found out about the *QE2* cruise, my wife and I had a musical evening built around Dick Miller, the longtime pianist in Woody Allen's Monday-night band at Michael's Pub; the Lee Wiley-inspired singer Nancy Harrow, now coming out again after raising two children; and Bob Greene, the Jelly Roll Morton pianist, who, we had recently discovered, lives just across the street from us. Miller, a swinging, updated Fats Waller and the repository of a thousand songs, accompanied Harrow and played solo, and I accompanied them both. Then Greene did half a dozen Morton tunes, and I accompanied him. I had written about Greene as a solo pianist and as the leader in the seventies of a phenomenal Jelly Roll Morton revival band. In his way he is the best of the various Morton pianists; he gets *inside* Morton's music. He is emotional, reverent, and swinging. We were immediately simpatico.

Hank O'Neal called a week later. He is the owner, with his wife, Shelley Shier, of HOSS, a small, high-class production company. He told me about the cruise on the *QE2*, saying that it would be devoted to New Orleans music. So far he had signed up one of the famous Preservation Hall bands (there are now three); the New Orleans Washboard Kings, a New York revival band led by Stan King, who plays washboard; the New Orleans singer Juanita Brooks; the New Orleans street band Frappé; the funky pianist Dr. John and his rhythm-and-blues band—and Bob Greene, who had already done several HOSS cruises. O'Neal asked if I might like to come along to write about the cruise. Although I was pretty sure I wouldn't go, I asked him to keep me posted.

Then I had a wild idea. What about my going not as a critic but as a drummer—with Bob Greene? I called Greene immediately and said I understood that he was going on a New Orleans cruise on the *QE2*, and he replied, "I need a drummer." I didn't say anything. He said, "You!" I said, "Really?" and we both laughed. Greene has a fantastic booming laugh, which descends from

Mr. Magoo, the myopic animated-cartoon character who first appeared in the fifties, his voice dubbed by the comedian Jim Backus. I said, "Are you sure?" And he said, "Absolutely. It would be great fun."

I was curious about Greene, and I looked him up in the reference books. He was born in 1922 in New York, and got a B.A. from Columbia. He held writing jobs in radio and television in the forties, fifties, and sixties, including a Washington stint with the Voice of America. In the seventies and the early eighties he was a full-time musician; he has divided his time since between performing and writing fiction and biography. Greene has a dapper, tweedy, geometric look. His face is square and strong-chinned, and the rest of him is rectangular. His speaking voice matches his laugh, and he loves to talk, particularly about Morton. ("Jelly has taught me that you don't play the music; the music plays you. *You* become the instrument.") If there were such a thing, Greene would hold the Jelly Roll Morton Chair of Music at an Ivy League college.

We had our first rehearsal a day or two after our telephone conversation. Greene had already stopped by to leave me a script, consisting of a loose, lyrical account of Morton's life interspersed with sixteen songs, most of them by Morton; I realized that he would be giving a kind of Jelly Roll Morton show on the cruise. Greene's script was out of forties radio. The first page went,

BOB GREENE'S WORLD OF JELLY ROLL MORTON

NARR:

Good evening.
We'd like to invite you to take a journey with us,
A trip back through time,
A voyage back to the turn of the century,
And the World of Jelly Roll Morton.
It's a quiet world, back there in the year of 1904.
Sleepy little towns, Main Street elms,
Screen porches, green lawns . . .
No radio, no television, no telephones.
If a town had a sound it would sound like this.

Greene would then play Louis Chauvin and Scott Joplin's delicate, airy "Heliotrope Bouquet," and the narration would pick up on the next page with "But that sweet innocence didn't last . . ."

Our rehearsal, sans narration, went smoothly. Greene the leader emerged for the first time. I was told to use only wire brushes. The protocol within even a jazz duo is strict; leaders command and sidemen obey. The bassist and band-leader Charles Mingus used to flatten sidemen who displeased him. I seemed somewhat rusty. Greene took Morton's "Shreveport Stomp" at a fast clip, and I flagged. I promised to practice, and Greene laughed and said, mysteriously, that writers don't need to practice.

Our second rehearsal was not as smooth as the first. Greene, in his booming, genial way, leaned on me. Some of Morton's tunes have two-bar breaks, and he rightly wanted me to come in—*whap!*—precisely on the third beat, not somewhere between the third and the fourth. He also wanted me to listen to Morton's 1928 trio recording of "Shreveport"—especially to the way the drummer Tommy Benford accents the second and fourth beats. After Greene left, I moved my snare drum next to the hi-fi and put on the old "Shreveport." Benford, who died recently, at the age of eighty-eight, had worked in Greene's Morton band, and Greene was close to him. Benford used his wire brushes in a peculiarly aggressive way on "Shreveport," hitting his snare heavily with his right brush on the accented beats and hustling Morton and the clarinetist Omer Simeon before him. (Drum Lore 1: Morton, the peerless braggart, claimed he'd invented the wire brush, which consists of a fan-shaped spray of fine, rigid wires retractable into a hollow rubber handle. Modern drummers have gotten louder and louder, and not many of them use wire brushes. Brushes once provided the carpeting for singers and ballad numbers and slow blues; there were even great wire-brush drummers, such as O'Neill Spencer and Jo Jones.) I played with the recording six or seven times until I got it right—until, in fact, I noticed that the cuticle on the third finger of my left hand, irritated by the rubber handle, was bleeding. I made a mental note to pack Band-Aids.

DAY one on the *QE2*. After dinner Greene and I were walking past the Chart Room, a small bar on Q Deck, when he spotted a grand piano sitting outside it. Like a camel smelling water, he headed for the piano at top speed, sat down, flipped the keyboard cover up, and immediately started playing—Morton, of course. “Buddy Bolden’s Blues” and “Mr. Joe” went by, and Greene suggested that I get my wire brushes. I had planned to bring my snare drum, but had decided against it at the last minute. What to play on? I went to my cabin, remembering Sid Catlett’s claim that he could swing an entire big band with a pair of brushes and a phone book, and collected my brushes and a thick leatherette folder containing *QE2* menus, writing paper, postcards, and the like. Frank Demond, the trombonist with the Preservation Hall band, had appeared next to the piano, and Greene suggested they do a pretty 1910 song by Herbert Ingraham called “All That I Ask of You Is Love.” Greene said that Morton, when playing it, used to hide the sheet music and claim it as his own. Greene and Demond played the song through, and the wire brushes made a good shushing sound on the folder. Benjamin Jaffe, a bassist who is the son of the late Allan Jaffe, the first shepherd of Preservation Hall, stopped to listen, and Greene urged him to get his bass. He did, and the four of us played half a dozen numbers. A small audience had gathered, and a middle-aged gent in a blue blazer started dancing by himself. Greene was beaming.

DAY four. Hank O’Neal had told Greene and me that we were to play twice—in the Grand Lounge that afternoon at five and in the Golden Lion Pub at 11:00 P.M. three days later. Greene felt that we might be lost in the lounge, a huge two-story room with a sizable dance floor and an encircling balcony. I wondered about attendance; it would be teatime for the countless British mums and dads on board. I also thought wildly of the incomparable Bob and Ray, and of the one-hour television special that their characters the Backstayges gave early in the morning, and of how it got one of the lowest Nielsen ratings ever recorded. Greene had persuaded Demond and Jaffe to join us on our last number in the lounge, along

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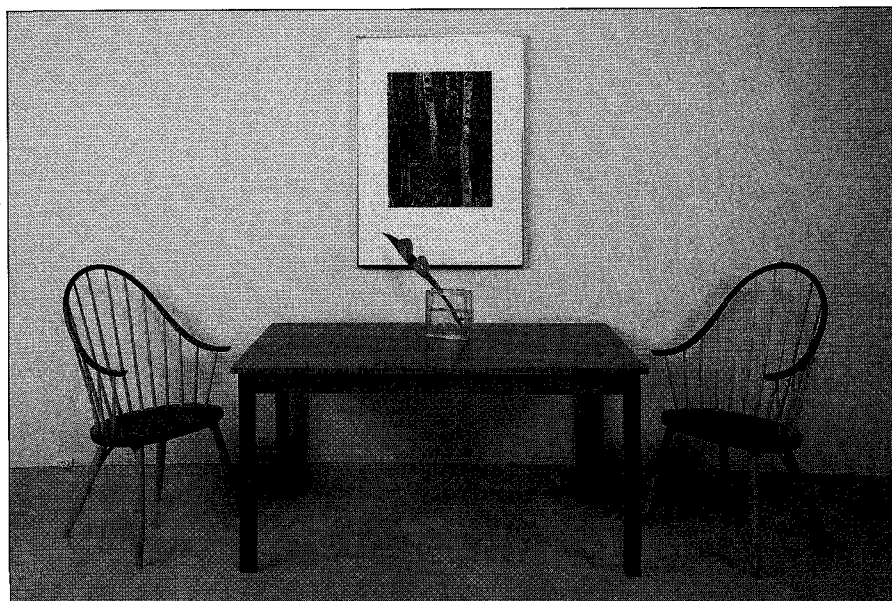
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with Wendell Brunious, the fine trumpeter with the Preservation band. And Greene had asked Paul Bacon, the designer and book-jacket king (and member of the Washboard Kings), to sing and play his comb on two numbers. (Comb players, who were a staple of the old New Orleans street-corner spasm bands, wrap cellophane or tissue paper around an ordinary hair comb, press it to their lips, and hum through it, producing a buzzing-fly sound that in the right hands can be very hot.) Demond, Jaffe, Brunious, Bacon, and I gathered beside the bandstand just before five, and Coach Greene gave us instructions and a pep talk. I was told not to get onto the bandstand until he introduced me as the "local drummer." (Morton used whoever was available on his endless travels.)

Greene began his narration, and I sat down and waited. I had tried out the drums on the bandstand. The snare was pitched too high and had no muffler, and the high hat was loose and too small. (Drum Lore 2: A high hat has two facing horizontal cymbals that are opened and closed by a foot pedal. A good drummer must be more than ambidextrous. The first thing he must learn is to pat his head and rub his stomach simultaneously. The left foot and the right foot, operating the high-hat pedal and the bass-drum pedal, work with and against each other, while the hands, also completely independent, perform a kind of counterpoint to what the feet are doing. A wizard drummer like Elvin Jones can play three or four different rhythms at once.) My hands were icy, and my stomach had a knot in it. I heard the words "local drummer," and I stumbled onto the bandstand and sat down at the drums. The room in front of me looked enormous and shadowy. Greene went immediately into an up-tempo "King Porter Stomp," Morton's great three-tiered flag-waver. My fright vanished in the third measure, and I became riveted on what I was supposed to be doing: keeping perfect time. (Drum Lore 3: Drummers have long been regarded by horn players as the dummies of jazz, but jazz drumming is far more complex than it appears. A drummer should be able to play at the back of the beat, the center of the beat, and the front of the beat, according to the demands of the group he is playing with. I concentrated on the exact center.)

"King Porter" went down well, but I was relieved when Bacon appeared for easy medium versions of "I Ain't Got Nobody" and "My Gal Sal." Greene introduced the feared "Shreveport," and off we went. I bore down ferociously on the second and fourth beats, adding lesser accents on one and three, so that I got a kind of fast shuffle rhythm. Near the end of the number I started hitting the metal snare rim with my right wire brush. It gave a terrific ringing *thwack*, and Greene looked up and laughed. The next four or five numbers went smoothly, but I stumbled several times on "Tiger Rag," which is fast and has several irregular rhythmic passages. Brunious, Demond, Jaffe, and Bacon joined in on the slow "Mamie's Blues," and I released the snares on the snare drum, which made it sound like a tom-tom, put down my brushes, and played a press roll with my fingers—a muted, mysterious sound. There was a good, if remote, round of applause, and I noticed how hot the spotlights had made the bandstand. For the first time I felt empathy for the countless sweating faces I'd seen on jazz bandstands.

DAY seven. Greene and I met in the Golden Lion Pub just before 11:00 P.M. for our second session. The bar is a hundred yards or so forward of the Grand Lounge, and is far more congenial—small, low-ceilinged, with a tiny dance floor. I found out later that Greene had spent the afternoon asking various members of the Preservation band and the Washboard Kings to sit in with us. The drum situation in the Golden Lion was no better than in the Grand Lounge. A *QE2* quartet was playing for dancing, and the drummer had a cookie-thin snare, a raggedy-looking high hat, and an unmanageably large ride cymbal. There was no bass drum and no tomtoms. I remembered how Sid Catlett had once sat in for several numbers at a Sunday session at Jimmy Ryan's and made Zutty Singleton's limply tuned drums sound magnificent. The quartet finished, and I asked the drummer if I could use his stuff (strict drummer-to-drummer protocol). He said sure, and to my horror sat down two feet away to watch.

Bob Greene went into his narration and played "Heliotrope." "King Porter" followed, and Paul Bacon did "I Ain't Got Nobody." "Shreveport" was next,



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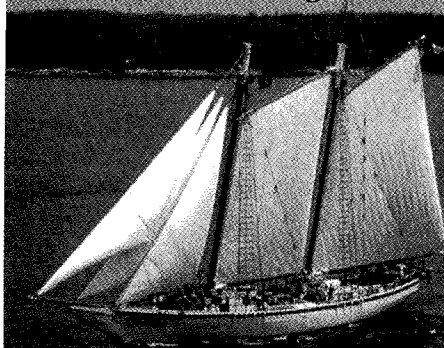
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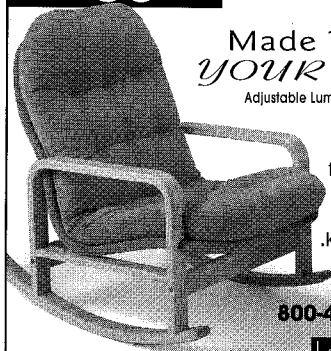
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and I was cheered when Eddy Davis, the banjoist with the Washboard Kings (and with Woody Allen's band), sat down in front of me. He is an all-around pro and a great student of older jazz. In most hands the banjo has a metallic, totalitarian effect, but Davis plays with guitar delicacy. "Shreveport" was a piece of cake. Frank Demond played "All That I Ask of You Is Love," and Murray Wall, the Washboard bassist, and Stan King, the Washboard leader, joined us for "Mr. Jelly Lord." King, big and white-haired, put the traditional thimbles on his fingers and, scraping and thumping his washboard, produced a powerful four-four beat. There were six of us now, and the music was heating up. Russ Whitman, the Washboard clarinetist, came on for "Wolverine Blues," and Wendell Brunious and Simon Wettenhall, the Washboard trumpeter, for a languorous "Buddy Bolden's Blues." The horns played organ chords behind the soloists, and the hair on my neck stood up. Tom Artin, the Washboard trombonist, and Rupert Cobb, a trumpeter with one of the ship's bands, joined in for "Tiger Rag." Twelve strong, we were suddenly a small big band. I picked up my drumsticks for the first time on the cruise, remembering the exhilarating lift that Catlett got when he switched midstream from brushes to sticks. Bob Greene shouted, "No, no! Stay with the brushes!" but, risking life and limb, I shook my head and shouted back, "We need sticks now!"

"Tiger Rag" was followed by the slow "Big Lip Blues," and a magical thing happened. The three trumpets soloed together open-horn—three friends talking and jostling their way across an evening meadow. Greene called for "Someday Sweetheart," and the closing ensemble was densely forested. I used rim shots on two and four, at the front of the beat. It was twelve-thirty, and the room was packed and jumping. Greene asked the audience if they wanted more, and they shouted "Yes!" We did Morton's mournful "Sweet Substitute" and closed with the hymnlike "Just a Little While to Stay Here." It was over. Eddy Davis, large and weathered, the music rolling off him, turned halfway and said over his shoulder, "Hey, we should do this again." It took a while to unwind, to savor the surprise of the music. Before we went to bed, Greene and Brunious

arranged to meet the next day in the Great Lounge at three o'clock, so that Greene could teach Brunious "King Porter Stomp." Greene asked me to join them.

We met for what turned out to be our last session. Greene fed the tune, measure by measure, strain by strain, to Brunious, a quick learner. At three-thirty an exercise class arrived in the lounge, and we adjourned to the Chart Room piano. Greene looked up from the keyboard and laughed. "Can you believe it!" he shouted. "Ninety years! Ninety years ago Jelly wrote this, and here we are still playing it! Astonishing!" I found a square cardboard jigsaw-puzzle box on a table at the end of the bar, put it on top of the piano, and used my wire brushes. After Brunious digested "King Porter," the three of us played on for an hour, Brunious on muted and then open horn, the sea moving past the window, our time suspended.

THREE days after we docked, I got a hand-delivered note from Greene. He was homesick for the boat, he wrote. So was I. He continued,

We had every damn musician on the ship up there with us, and they were playing pretty too, with a minimum of banging and blaring. Granted we had good material, granted we dictated the taste and the tempos. But I don't think any audience had a better time than the one listening to us in the Golden Lion, and when I asked if we should stop you heard their cry and protest that we go on. And when we were done, when we had gone on almost an hour and a half without stop, we both know they would have stayed another half hour before their bed time. They were part of us, joined to us by the music.

Suddenly it occurred to me that I hadn't been paid for the cruise, as Greene had been, and I composed a letter.

Dear Bob and/or Hank:

I don't know exactly how to put this, but I felt that I should be paid something for my work on the cruise, even if it's only a token. It would make everything legal. It would tell me that I know how to drive the car.

Cordially,

But I haven't mailed it. ☹

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After the Great War shell-shocked veterans were advised to read Jane Austen, "perhaps to restore their faith in a world that had been blown apart," the author writes, "while at the same time respecting their sense of the world's fragility"

by Lee Siegel

JANE AUSTEN:

A Biography

by Claire Tomalin.
Knopf, 352 pages, \$27.50.

JANE AUSTEN:

A Life

by David Nokes.
Farrar Straus & Giroux,
578 pages, \$35.00.

MY wife is an admirer of Jane Austen but not, like me, a devotee. She recently informed me over breakfast that since I started going back to Austen's novels, I have become more polite but less sincere.

Her concern was the kind of thing Lionel Trilling must have had in mind when he wrote that the responses to Austen's work were nearly as interesting and important as the work itself. He went on to say that the reader trying to decide for or against Austen was "required to make no mere literary judgment but a decision about his own character and personality, and about his relation to society and all of life." Not liking Jane Austen's darkly streaked social comedies, Trilling believed, put a person under suspicion "let us face it—of a want of breeding."

Though Trilling found such an attitude "absurd and distasteful," he was the one who so extravagantly defined it. When he started admiring the "cool elegance" of Austen's surname, one felt almost embarrassed by the self-exposure. Yet it's hard to disagree with his assessment of Austen. No other author goes



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with such casual intimacy as she, for all her delicate soundings of formal social relations, into the vulnerable spot where society touches the root of self. And few authors are at the same time so quietly fearsome and so intensely consoling.

Who's afraid of Jane Austen—that uncanny panoptic miniaturist who captures all the degrees of vanity, snobbery, and self-deception, that piercing dramatizer of encounters between emotion and convention, private hopes and public constraints? The very thought of finding herself alone with Austen intimidated, of all people, Virginia Woolf. Describing what it might be like to be in a room with her, Woolf imagined

a sense of meaning withheld, a smile at something unseen, an atmosphere of perfect control and courtesy mixed with something finely satirical, which, were it not directed against things in general rather than against individuals, would, so I feel, make it alarming to find her at home.

Henry James, in whose fiction manners are often nonblunt instruments of destruction, could be condescending about one of his strongest influences, though he acknowledged her genius. Austen's heroines had "small and second-rate minds and were perfect little she-Philistines," he thought. "But I think that is partly what makes them interesting today." And Austen irritated Emerson: he found her novels "vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention, imprisoned in the wretched conventions of English society." All that her characters cared about was "marriageableness." "Suicide," the great Transcendentalist proposed, "is more respectable."

No one, it seems, has ever been neutral or aloof about Jane Austen. From the time of her death, at the age of forty-one, in 1817, possibly from either Addison's or Hodgkin's disease, she has been a contested figure. Her beloved sister Cassandra destroyed many of her letters and made excisions in others, prompting biographers to suspect that she was trying to suppress evidence either of some deep depression or of unseemly malice or spleen. Brief memoirs of Austen written by her descendants amount to hagiographies. Her great-nephew edited and bowdlerized the first edition of her letters in 1884, claiming that "no malice lurked beneath" Austen's wit, which is

like saying that no alcohol lurks in claret.

By 1896 the word "Janeite" had come into the language as a term signifying literary fervor and adoration. To read some Janeite expressions of enthusiasm, one would think that Mansfield Park was the name of a local soccer team. Anti-Janeites accused their opponents of a lack of virility. (They especially disliked what they thought were Austen's portrayals of men as gossips without vocation.) Later, in the 1940s and 1950s, some critics tried to save Austen from her Janeite admirers, claiming that Austen's sense of decorum, of the forms of politeness and tact, were what the Janeites most prized but what Austen, with lethal irony, most wanted to subvert. She composed with a "regulated hatred," as one of these writers put it—a steady, subtle corrosiveness toward smothering conventionality. She was not, as Henry James had once mocked the Janeites' benign conception of her, "our dear, everybody's dear, Jane."

A HUNDRED years after "Janeite" entered the language, Jane Austen is everywhere. It's a good bet that the highly entertaining, often intelligent and moving, and always inadequate film versions of her novels are more popular than the novels themselves. But there's no doubt that more people are reading her since the craze began.

Of course, contemporary women are likely to identify with smart, vital, and strong-willed heroines like Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse. And there must be no lack of female empathy for the hemmed-in Fanny Price, for the heartstrong Marianne Dashwood and her self-suppressed sister Elinor, for the wise, sad, unfulfilled Anne Elliot. But some people must cherish Austen now simply because she trained her attention on a patch of living that, for the most part, has been abandoned in American imaginative writing. We are surrounded by consequential social circumstances, but we have few writers who can make sense of society without reducing it to an explanation. In his aversion to Austen, Emerson was true to his own inclinations. Too much Emerson—too much grandiose withdrawal, too much self-indulgence masquerading as self-creation—is probably the deepest cause of the Austen revival in this country.

Because she wrote at a time of rapid

social flux, Austen offers an unexpected illumination of our situation. In late-eighteenth-century England the beginnings of industrial democracy were dismantling the old organic forms of community and throwing identity into question. An aristocracy of birth was giving way to an aristocracy of wealth. Modern commerce, with global ambitions, was creating a fluid, contingent, modern sense of self. Roles were changing, roots were tearing, the definition of the individual was evolving. It was then that Austen wrote great English novels. Now they are great American novels.

That's not to say that Austen approached the changing arrangements in her society and culture directly. She famously—or infamously—didn't. She has even been faulted for barely referring to the dramatic historical events she lived through: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the expansion of colonialism. The literary scholar Edward Said has accused her of giving approval in *Mansfield Park* to slavery; according to Said, Austen makes the restoration of order at the Bertrams' plantation in Antigua the foundation for their eventual moral renovation at home. Yet Mansfield was where, in 1772, a court passed down a decision prohibiting the holding of black slaves in England. Austen decided to set an estate called Mansfield in a novel that makes the quiet, ungrasping decency of Fanny Price, its humbly born heroine, a reproach to the upper classes' rapacious masculine activity. Austen's ultrasensitive social and moral antennae could, among other things, obliquely register, and pass stern judgment on, history's distant rumbling.

AS an unmarried and almost penniless woman, Austen seized on laughter to live. Her outer life was entirely uneventful as far as we know. Her biographers therefore have had to lean heavily on her letters—in which the humor of battered pride and obstructed genius ranges from satiric to redemptive to cruel—and to resort to filling in space with descriptions of her family and accounts of her surroundings.

These two new biographies follow that tack. They're both solid, readable accounts, sticking close to Austen's life and milieu. Claire Tomalin's is more fun, and better written, though it some-

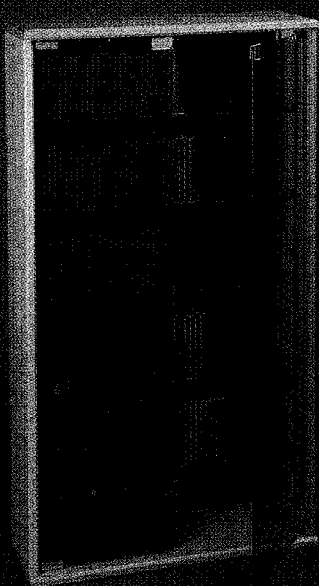
times seems hastily thrown together and desperately digressive. Tomalin is not herself a writer of fiction, but she has a novelist's imagination and playful insight. When she does comment—sparingly—on Austen's work, or lightly speculate on the formative weight of her social and cultural influences, she's usually absorbing and acute.

David Nokes's book is more tightly composed. Focusing exclusively on Austen's life and the lives of her relatives, Nokes never engages the fiction and barely refers to the social and cultural context. Strangely, he believes that he is doing iconoclastic work: "I have had the temerity not only to write about Jane Austen, but to do so in a manner which challenges the familiar image of her as a literary maiden aunt . . . to present her . . . as rebellious, satirical and wild." In fact critics and biographers have been presenting Austen as rebellious, satirical, and wild, and also as cold, anal, and malicious, for half a century. The former qualities can be found subtly insinuated in a biography by Jane Aiken Hodge, and the latter in one by John Halperin, neither of whom Nokes mentions or cites. Nokes loves triumphantly to repeat this line from one of Austen's letters: "If I *am* a wild beast, I cannot help it. It is not my own fault." But he leaves out the sentence before it: "I am rather frightened by hearing that she wishes to be introduced to *me*." Austen was responding to someone's wish to meet the rumored author of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*; with her usual combination of unwild insecurity and confident self-deprecation, she was envisioning herself as an animal on display in a cage.

Nokes's life is often perceptive, and it has a rich narrative density, but his details tend to pile up into a blurring mélange. A British don, he has a high Oxbridge tone, which together with a quaint eighteenth-century literary affect can be wearying: "She did not greatly repine at the absence of titled acquaintances." (And I do wish that starry-eyed, or distracted, American publishers would make their increasing ranks of British authors explain, to those of us who did not attend Harrow, the meaning of being someone's "fag" and similar heartwarming public-school expressions.)

Both biographies include abundant excerpts from the letters, with all their

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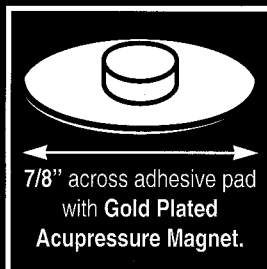
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mundane descriptions couched in revelatory style, and also their flashes of embitterment.

Pictures of perfection as you know, make me sick & wicked.

They called, they came and they sat and they went. [on a visit from some local gentry]

Her hair is done up with an elegance to do credit to any Education.

I do not want people to be very agreeable, as it saves me the trouble of liking them a great deal.

Mrs. Hall of Sherbourn was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected, owing to a fright—I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband.

Such intimate snippets of perception bring us as close to the living, breathing woman as it is possible to get—maybe, in the last quotation, closer than we'd like to get. But in Austen's day dying infants were a tragically common occurrence. Then, too, women were often exhausted to death, and families impoverished, by continual child-bearing. Behind Austen's apparent cruelty was a hardness, and behind that perhaps a genuine outrage.

The person is in both biographies, but anyone curious about Austen the writer will have to go elsewhere. That's a shame. Austen's style is one of English literature's marvels. Her repartee is sometimes as dazzling as anything in Sheridan, and is one reason that her perpetual hope of seeing exciting theater was disappointed whenever she went. Here's an exchange from *Pride and Prejudice* between Elizabeth and Darcy, starting with Darcy.

"There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome."

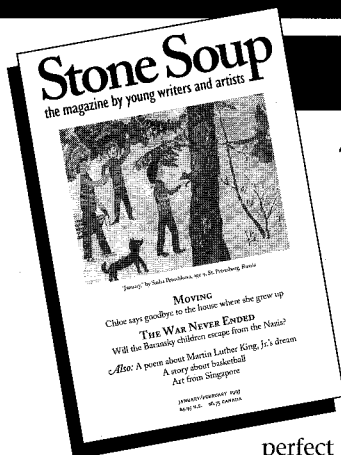
"And your defect is a propensity to hate everybody."

"And yours," he replied with a smile, "is wilfully to misunderstand them."

And there are the superfine irony and the balletic insight, as in these two passages from *Emma*:

Human nature is so well-disposed towards those who are in interesting sit-

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AT

uations, that a young person, who either marries or dies, is sure of being kindly spoken of.

She did not repent what she had done; she still thought herself a better judge of such a point of female right and refinement than he could be; but yet she had a sort of habitual respect for his judgment in general, which made her dislike having it so loudly against her; and to have him sitting just opposite to her in angry state, was very disagreeable.

As Virginia Woolf once declared, it's hard to catch Jane Austen in the act of greatness. But Woolf was too much the aesthete, too much the gifted borderline solipsist, to do so. For Austen captured the way the mind works by following it out into the world. Her expository prose is on the verge of dissolving into dialogue, and her dialogue about to condense into expository prose. Consider these two passages, the first from *Mansfield Park* and the second from *Sense and Sensibility*.

"It often grieves me to the heart—to think of the contrast between them—to think that where nature has made so little difference, circumstances should have made so much. . . ."

Two ladies were waiting for their carriage, and one of them was giving the other an account of the intended match, in a voice so little attempting concealment, that it was impossible for him not to hear all.

Actually, the first passage is exposition and the second dialogue; I changed a pronoun and the tense in the former and a pronoun in the latter. I hope I've persuaded you. Even in the most elaborate expository passage the cadences seem almost spoken. Austen's sentences operate inwardly and outwardly at once—they go into a quiet corner of the mind and out into the busy world.

And just as Austen's characters are completed by their relations with other people, her sentences cannot function alone. Like her self-deceived heroines, they are usually a little blind. They bear hints of their own impending amplification, qualification, contradiction. That semantic instability drives us from one uneventful-seeming statement to the next; we feel propelled by a coming displacement of meaning ("she was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things no more"). Austen's

whole style is an evanescence laid solidly and matter-of-factly on the page like plates on a table.

That's especially plain when her sentences burst with male-style certainty—"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (the celebrated first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*). Austen ironized such propositions into insubstantiality—"However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood . . ." (the less celebrated second sentence). She set the blaring horns of social and psychological certainty against the piccolo of minute observation; and we hear the music in her meaning rather than in the physical sound of her words.

BOTH these biographies contain, of course, the well-known bare essentials of Austen's life: early broken hearts for both Jane and her elder sister, Cassandra, followed by a double spinsterhood in which they were virtually "wedded to each other," as their mother put it; a mysterious romance in a seaside town that may or may not have taken place; relentless writing and revision; timid, belated attempts to publish; late success and threadbare financial independence as an author who nevertheless remained virtually anonymous to the reading public until after her early death.

Less well known are the remarkably strong personalities in Austen's family. Her aunt Philadelphia, cut off from her inheritance by tightfisted relatives, voyaged to India in search of a husband who might save her from the poorhouse, or worse. (She found one.) Eliza, Philadelphia's daughter, was an extraordinary woman, and almost definitely the product of her mother's adulterous affair with Warren Hastings, the governor-general of British India; though Hastings never legally acknowledged Eliza, he helped her with money and with his connections until he died. As a result of Hastings's generosity, but also because of her intrepid nature, Eliza moved in the highest social and political circles in Paris and London. She married a dubious French count, journeyed back and forth between England and France during the French Revolution, barely escaped the Terror, and returned to live in

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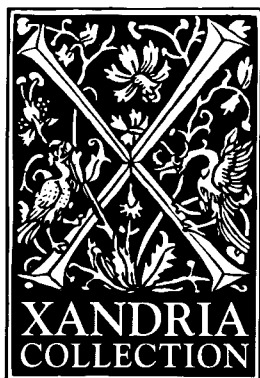
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England, where she married one of Jane's brothers after the guillotine took her unfortunate first husband's head.

Jane had six brothers, who, as Eliza did, brought news of the world into her avid imagination. One was a clergyman possessed of modest literary ambitions and mediocre talent. Another one, Eliza's husband, was a London banker who rose high before crashing into insolvency, and then he, too, entered the clergy. Two brothers went into the navy, traveling around the world on matters military and colonial; both of them eventually became admirals. Austen especially loved and even identified with one of her seafaring brothers, Frank—think of *Persuasion's* ideal union of Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, whom she in large part based on Frank. She admired men of action and at one time considered writing a life of Napoleon. (That would have been something.)

Though economically dependent on her family for most of her life, Austen was valued by her parents and siblings as a productive member of the household. She was no madwoman with a quill. Her country-curate father, a kind, educated, benevolent, and shrewd man, encouraged her to become a professional writer when he saw that she was not going to marry. He took the initiative of approaching a publisher on her behalf—the first step toward Jane's entrance into the literary world. It was a time of increased opportunity—if not respectability—for women writers, and for leisured women readers, and Jane's father thought he saw a way for his precariously supported daughter to make a living. Jane's mother, who herself wrote deftly witty poems to amuse the family, heartily agreed.

Jane read her often wildly wicked and satiric fiction aloud to her admiring parents and siblings as she created it. (She also loved singing popular songs while accompanying herself on the piano.) This social cradle for her fiction partly accounts for its social vitality, and also for her characters' repartee. Her family must have sensed a will operating in the house that was perhaps steelier, more driven, and more ruthless than the male Austen wills plying imperial seas. Jane may have been stigmatized as an "old maid," but her stubborn fidelity to her own nature saved her from betraying her art.

AUSTEN was a satirist above all, with tragic and romantic moods. She had a flawless ear for moral counterpoint, for the hidden chords of how things ought to be and really were. She pitched her delicately endangered sentences, her psychology, her dialogue and drama, to some invisible key way at the back of her language, just as Mozart pitched his compositions to a frequency beyond human range, way at the back of his music. That's why even her clumsiest turns of plot, or her characters' foggiest motivations, are accommodated like straggling notes by a larger harmony.

Of her two other brothers, one was adopted by distant relations, taken from the Austen home and eventually made the heir to a large fortune and estate; the other, born retarded, was sent when very young to a nearby village, where a family was paid to take care of him. Such opposing circumstances, arbitrary and disruptive, must have clinched the satirist's vocation, along with her beautifully contingent style. They might also help to explain why, for Austen, preserving social forms was as necessary as unmasking them.

That simultaneous tearing down of conventions and institutions and keeping them intact is finally what is so healing (a good word, badly misused) about Austen. It runs parallel to her exquisite balance of inner and social lives. After all, her novels, mostly filled with bad marriages, end with marriages that are perfect—so perfect that they seem like ideal rebukes to the reality of marriage in her fiction. A whole world is put into question, remains stable and whole, but is left dangling. After the First World War, shell-shocked veterans were advised to read Austen's novels for therapy, perhaps to restore their faith in a world that had been blown apart while at the same time respecting their sense of the world's fragility. Americans who are intelligent and skeptical, but who are frazzled by pundit-unmaskers, by academic see-throughers, by Hollywood exploders of social forms, may be drawn to Jane Austen for a similar reason.

Or, as Kipling has a character put it in "The Janeites," a story about a group of soldiers in the First World War who keep hold of their sanity by organizing a secret Austen cult and cherishing the way Austen carefully molds life's replenishing smaller motions: "There's no one to touch Jane when you're in a tight place." ☼

The Socialist Who Loved Keats

The late Irving Howe—literary critic, biographer, historian, and teacher—was a beacon of a certain kind of intellectual and moral possibility

by Nathan Glick

IRVING Howe, who died in 1993, holds a unique and still oddly influential place in American intellectual life. Undaunted by normal constraints on time and energy, he pursued two consuming careers simultaneously, as literary critic and as political gadfly. Remarkably, he also taught English, wrote a monumental work of social history (*World of Our Fathers*, winner of the 1976 National Book Award), and helped to salvage a rich but dying language. In none of these realms

did he make any concessions to political correctness or literary fashion.

In a period that saw a steady decline of socialist movements and an almost unanimous acceptance of market capitalism, he persisted in calling himself a democratic socialist, not because he expected socialism to revive and succeed but because he wanted to reiterate the urgent moral need for a fairer, more fraternal, more egalitarian society. Howe attracted a youthful following drawn to his

tough-minded idealism, itself traceable to such incorruptible forebears as Eugene V. Debs and Norman Thomas, socialist leaders of a more innocent and hopeful age.

Beyond politics, Howe had been immersed since adolescence in the art and ambiguities of literature. During a bout of scarlet fever he read the collected poems of Milton, Keats, and Wordsworth. By age nineteen he was lecturing the comrades on the loss of faith in Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" and the clash between Western reason and Eastern mysticism in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. He left a sizable body of literary criticism that faithfully conveyed in each case the essence of a work and the quality of the author's mind. Such a legacy may not produce a school of disciples—his voice was too idiosyncratic for easy emulation—but it may well sustain its beneficent influence on emerging younger critics. It is symptomatic of Howe's resilient double nature that he wrote books about the union leader Walter Reuther and the novelist William Faulkner, about Leon Trotsky and Thomas Hardy, about socialist doctrine and literary modernism.

Irving Howe may have been the last of a special breed of wide-ranging literary-political New York intellectuals who were grouped around the *Partisan Review*. Although its fees were pathetic and its circulation rarely over 10,000, by the late 1940s the *Partisan Review* was recognized as the country's most prestigious and influential voice of high culture. Its special flavor was provided by a small group of regular contributors who came to be known as "the New York intellectuals." No one has more relentlessly analyzed, criticized, and celebrated this group than Irving Howe, a latecomer and troublemaker but one of their own. The New York intellectuals, he wrote in a magisterial essay so titled,

have a fondness for ideological speculation; they write literary criticism with a strong social emphasis; they revel in polemic; they strive self-consciously to be "brilliant" . . . [Their] social roots . . . are not hard to trace. With a few delightful exceptions—a tendril from Yale, a vine from Seattle—they stem from the world of the immigrant Jews.

The sly references to Dwight Macdonald and Mary McCarthy, both of whom



were among the founding editors of *PR*, could be expanded to include many more non-Jews. It is testimony to the magnetic appeal and rising reputation of *PR* that T. S. Eliot offered the journal one of his *Four Quartets* and that the critic and novelist Elizabeth Hardwick left her native Kentucky for New York because, she confessed, "I wanted to become a New York Jewish intellectual."

In recent years a deluge of memoirs, critical studies, and Ph.D. dissertations have attested to the powerful influence the New York intellectuals had on the cultural tastes of American elites and on the reading lists of university literature and sociology courses. But Howe called attention as well to the impact of the *PR* style on the emerging group of Jewish novelists that included Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, and Norman Mailer: "I think it no exaggeration to say that since Faulkner and Hemingway the one major innovation in American prose style has been the yoking of street raciness and high-culture mandarin which we associate with American Jewish writers."

This association of apparent opposites so intrigued Howe that he returned to it often in discussing the New York intellectuals. And in a curious way it could be seen in the two conflicting impulses of his own literary career. On the one hand, he strove for a tone of high moral seriousness and an elevated language that early on legitimized his ambition to be accepted as a significant critic. On the other, he wanted to avoid academic stuffiness and to preserve elements of the blunt style of polemic—sardonic, fast-paced, at times merciless—that he had mastered in the sectarian alcoves of the City College of New York.

The dominant qualities in Howe's critical prose are its lucidity, its muscular flexibility, and its drive, all serving his gifts for vivid exposition and persuasive analysis. But there was also a lighter side to this earnest critic. When a writer charmed or impressed him, he would occasionally incorporate the author's tone and tempo into his own commentary. A particularly infectious example of this mimetic talent erupted when Howe introduced the brainy sad-sack hero of Saul Bellow's *Herzog*.

Where shall a contemporary novel begin? Perhaps unavoidably: with the busted hero reeling from a messy di-

voice and moaning in a malodorous furnished room; picking at his psyche's wounds like a boy at knee scabs; rehearsing the mighty shambles of ambition ("how I rose from humble origins to complete disaster"); cursing the heart-and-ball breakers, both wives and volunteers, who have, he claims, laid him low; snarling contempt at his own self-pity with a Johnsonian epigram, "Grief, Sir, is a species of idleness"; and yet, amidst all this woe, bubbling with intellectual hope, as also with intellectual gas, and consoling himself with the truth that indeed "there were worse cripples around."

Having indulged himself with this savory imitation of Bellow's style, Howe returned to his own sober voice, delivering sweeping yet shrewdly accurate appraisals of the author.

All of Bellow's books—whether melancholy realism, moral fable, or picaresque fantasia—represent for him a new departure, a chosen risk in form and perception. Bellow has the most powerful mind among contemporary American novelists, or at least, he is the American novelist who best assimilates his intelligence to creative purpose. This might have been foreseen at the beginning of his career, for he has always been able to turn out a first-rate piece of discursive prose; what could not have been foreseen was that he would also become a virtuoso of fictional technique and language.

The essay on Bellow was written in what I would call Howe's "middle period," roughly 1960–1975, when he evolved an apolitical approach to literature, along with a style of clarity, intellectual rigor, and emotional responsiveness. In retrospect, his major work of the 1950s, *Politics and the Novel*, marked his transition from political man incidentally fascinated by literature to professional literary man (he taught English for nearly forty years, at Brandeis, Stanford, and the City University of New York) who wrote and edited political articles in his spare time. Howe found that each of eleven selected novelists, from Dostoevsky and Hawthorne to Malraux and Orwell, raised troubling questions about morality, character, and motive. The temptation to deliver judgments based on socialist convictions must have been strong. But Howe made a deliberate effort to avoid the often righteous tone of

his political writing. The essays in *Politics and the Novel* display an unexpected tolerance of diverse ideologies, along with an empathy even for weakness of character and an appreciation of eccentricity and charm for their own sake.

At times, however, he went too far in his swing toward what Edmund Wilson facetiously called "liquoratory quiddicism" and adopted refined mannerisms and abstract formulations borrowed from Henry James or Lionel Trilling that clearly did not suit his natural voice—for example, "the very yearning for choice reveals the power of destiny." But at his best—and most of *Politics and the Novel* sustains an impressive level of commentary—he could be passionate and pungent. Summing up Turgenev's political wisdom in *Fathers and Sons* and other novels, Howe revealed how far he himself had come from the doctrinal certainties of his youth.

He speaks to us for the right to indecision, which is almost as great a right as the right to negation. He speaks to us for a politics of hesitation, a politics that will never save the world but without which the world will never be worth saving. He speaks to us with the authority of failure.

What is most striking in *Politics and the Novel* is Howe's appetite for novels that are intellectually challenging and construct their plots against a background of crucial historical movements, even when their politics are conservative or reactionary, as is the case in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, and James's *The Princess Casamassima*. Yet some years later, when he confronted Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, a novel lacking the intellectual force or historical significance of those earlier works, Howe rejected the fashionable disparagement of the author's crude style and half-baked ideas. Dreiser, he insisted, "ranks among the American giants, the very few American giants we have had. . . . What makes him so absorbing a novelist, despite all of his grave faults, is that he remains endlessly open to experience." Unlike the typically dispiriting naturalists, Dreiser "is always on the watch for a glimmer of transcendence. . . . [for] the possibility of 'a mystic something of beauty that perennially transfigures the world.'" But along with this high-flown if deeply felt sentiment, Howe recog-

nized that Clyde Griffiths, Dreiser's ill-fated hero, embodies a very different universal quality: "He represents . . . our collective smallness, the common denominator of our foolish tastes and tawdry ambitions. He is that part of ourselves in which we take no pride, but know to be a settled resident."

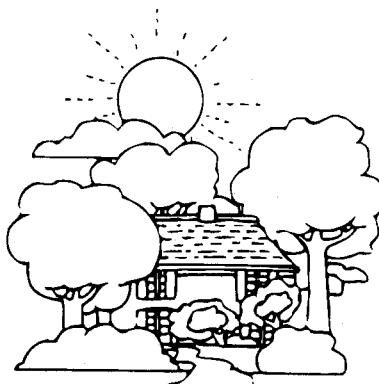
AS a critic, Irving Howe cast a wide net. His sympathies extended to obscure novelists and poets; he tried single-handedly to restore the reputation of Edwin Arlington Robinson. He wrote about several generations of Jewish American novelists whose roots and outlooks resonated familiarly in his own experience. And he wrote about Emerson, Hawthorne, and Whitman, whose Transcendentalist idealism he found both distant and personally affecting. Starting with an admiring book about Thomas Hardy, Howe proceeded in his later years to rediscover for an intellectual public some of the famous but at the time underestimated figures of nineteenth-century British fiction—among them Sir Walter Scott, Anthony Trollope, and George Eliot.

On separate occasions Howe's strong views about contemporary American writers infuriated Ralph Ellison and Philip Roth, and led to unusually memorable ripostes. In a long essay on black writing Howe praised Richard Wright's novel *Native Son* (1940) for its racial ferocity and "clenched militancy." He took issue with James Baldwin's objection that Wright's "protest" fiction represented blacks only as victims. He also deplored Ralph Ellison's comment, on receiving the National Book Award for *Invisible Man* (1952), that he tried "to see America with an awareness of its rich diversity and its almost magical fluidity and freedom." With an uncharacteristic rhetorical flourish Howe laid down his private party line: "How could a Negro put pen to paper, how could he so much as think or breathe, without some impulsion to protest?"

So peremptory a pronouncement by a Jewish critic who claimed all of world literature as his terrain clearly invited attack. Ellison rose to the occasion with a searing essay ("The World and the Jug," included in his book *Shadow and Act*) that went beyond simply answering Howe to an eloquent recall of his own

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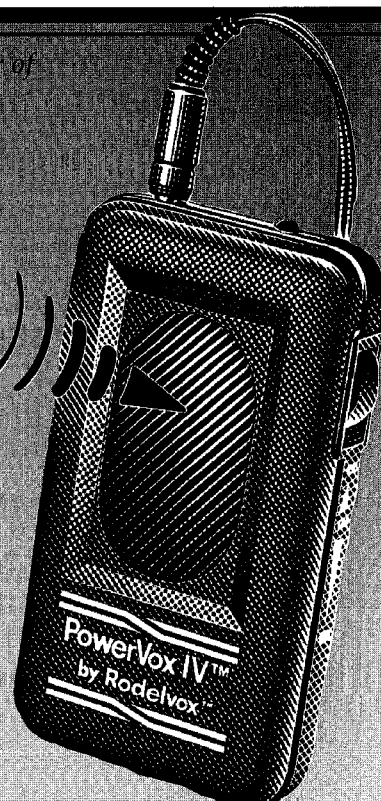
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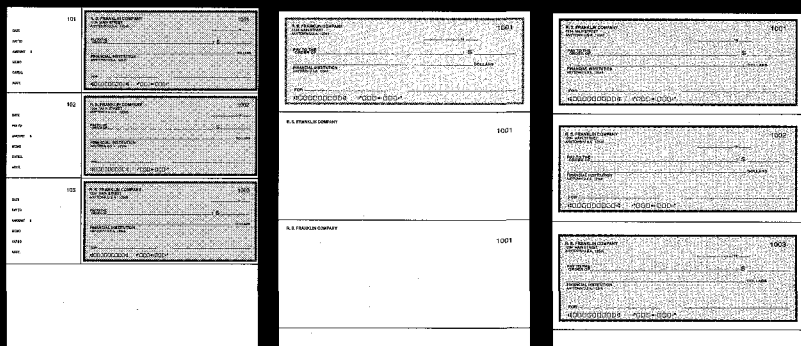
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A	P	E	I	T	N	B	W	U	T	R	I	N
A	D	I	I	G	F	F	E	H	T	R	E	N
T	P	R	I	N	T	S	O	H	E	W	O	U
L	D	K	N	O	W	H	E	N	T	O	S	
T	O	P	U	N	W	R	A	P	P	I	N	G

Cryptacrostic

- TRIP + OD
- F(ET)ISH
- STRAIT (anag.)
- DRAG + ON(F)LY
- DOWN + S + WING
- TW(O)ISTED
- ANGST (hidden)
- B(ILK)ED
- DI(SPA)TCH
- WA(GO)NT + RAIN
- TO + WIN + G
- FORG(IV)E
- WOM + BAT (rev.)
- BUTTIE + D
- SUB + TRAC + T (cart + bus rev.)
- T + OWNS + HIP
- HAWT + HORN (what anag.)
- NEGATIVISM (anag.)
- PUP + PET
- ME(AD)OW
- A + PO + THE + GM
- SP(O)KEN (ESPN anag.)
- ME + TIER
- H(AND + C)UFF
- POT + ENT (net anag.)
- T(WITCH)ED
- BUD + A + PEST
- MO(RIB)UND
- RI + VETS
- T + OTTER
- TH(WART)ING
- MATTER (double def.)
- CH(I)PMUNK
- WIND + O + W
- STEIN (anag.)
- TRI(UMP)HS (shirt rev.)

critical awakening and his choice of literary models.

I was freed not by propagandists or by the example of Wright . . . but by composers, novelists, and poets who spoke to me of more interesting and freer ways of life. . . . While one can do nothing about choosing one's relatives, one can, as artist, choose one's "ancestors." Wright was, in this sense, a "relative"; Hemingway an "ancestor."

The exchanges between Howe and Ellison were sharp but civil, with Howe yielding somewhat toward the end; polemics on a coruscating level, they deserve to be reissued under one cover.

Howe's other target of provocation was Philip Roth, a literary street fighter more than capable of taking on his tormentor. A decade after writing a favorable review of Roth's first book, *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959), Howe decided that the novelist's rising reputation, with the publication of *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), needed major surgery. In a full-scale broadside, "Philip Roth Reconsidered," Howe committed an act of what he might have called literary slum clearance. He convicted Roth of vulgarity, condescension, and moral callousness before going on to specific stylistic crimes.

Another decade later—resentment percolating over time—Roth introduced into his semi-autobiographical novel *The Anatomy Lesson* the critic Milton Appel, whose harsh reconsideration of the hero's work cut him to the quick. "You pervert my intentions, then call me perverse!" Zuckerman-Roth shouts over the phone to his accuser. "You lay hold of my comedy with your ten-ton gravity and turn it into a travesty. My coarse, vindictive fantasies, your honorable, idealistic humanist concerns." But to an interviewer Roth once held up his Irving Howe file and said wistfully, "He was a real reader."

MOST of Howe's criticism was not so embattled. On the contrary, writing about novels and poems served him as an escape from the polemical strains of politics, a way of moving from the public realm to the private, from social issues to personal relations. In the last years of his life, having spent more than three decades dealing with complexity and subtlety, he turned his attention to discovering some basic secrets of fictional art. How can an author con-

vey goodness without sentimentality or bathos? Why does the “tone” of a novel, that elusive emanation of style, often speak to us more strikingly than the solid logic of incident and character? Why do certain “gratuitous details,” not essential to a novel’s structure, remain most vividly in the mind and memory?

These are some of the questions Howe addressed in short pieces collected by his son Nicholas in a posthumous volume titled *A Critic’s Notebook* (1994). Answering them, he displayed a side of his critical persona not prominent earlier. Here he was playful, ruminative, modest, and curious. He found a special wisdom and delight in the works of writers’ late years—such as the “transparency” and “lack of complicating devices” in one of Chekhov’s last stories. A comment on Leo Tolstoy opens with this touching tribute:

Reading the aged Tolstoy stirs the heart. He will not yield to time, sloth, or nature. He clings to the waist of the life force. Deep into old age, he battles with the world, more often with himself, returning in his diaries, fictions, and tracts to the unanswerable questions that torment him. Blessed old magician, he is free of literary posture and the sins of eloquence.

Turning in his own later writings toward a Tolstoyan plainness, Howe shared the old magician’s “need for meaning” and “restlessness of mind,” even as he too on occasion succumbed “to moral crankiness . . . to intemperate demands for temperance.”

The journey from combative youth to contemplative old age—in politics as in literary taste—was a long and instructive one, much of it told in *A Margin of Hope* (1982). Howe’s “intellectual autobiography,” the most personal and engaging of his books. The 1950s saw a broad movement among the New York intellectuals away from dogmatic leftism and toward a more flexible liberalism and a more benign appraisal of American society. Even as he moved in that direction, Howe was among the last of his former comrades, and the most reluctant, to give up an intransigently radical stance. Although he spent most of the postwar decade, after a stint in the Army, building an academic and literary career, he missed the excitement of a “movement,” a community of fellow believers “absorbed in ideas beyond the smallness of self.”

How does one create a movement out of abandoned doctrines and uncertain hopes? Howe’s answer was apologetically ironic: “When intellectuals can do nothing else they start a magazine.” In 1954 he and a colleague at Brandeis University launched *Dissent*, a quarterly that advocated, and at the same time tried stumbly to define, “democratic socialism.” As might be expected, a magazine so earnest and political in its ambitions did not produce the cerebral fireworks of the old *Partisan Review*. Times had changed, and even radical intellectuals had found jobs and tenure in the universities. Much of the theoretical and analytical writing in *Dissent* bore the heavy weight of academic stolidity. The redeeming liveliness came from younger writers grappling with the more urgent problems of improving daily life—in housing, health care, welfare, and race relations—or from less ideological reporting by seasoned journalists about, for example, life among the unemployed in a Pennsylvania mining town, or the chaotic early period of the Sandinista takeover in Nicaragua.

Perhaps the most valuable function of *Dissent* and its contributors in the late 1960s and early 1970s was to keep their democratic sanity when all around them on the New Left—students, professors, and *The New York Review of Books*—were losing theirs to some apocalyptic vision of revolution inspired by Fidel Castro, Mao Zedong, and Ho Chi Minh.

But for Howe and his colleagues—Michael Harrington, whose book *The Other America* (1962) helped to launch the War on Poverty, and the political philosopher Michael Walzer—the main purpose of *Dissent* was to clarify the moral status and practical viability of socialism, vaguely defined as a more equitable, more universally democratic society. They were on strong ground in deploring the obvious inequities and injustices of capitalism. But they also recognized the far deadlier injustices of societies around the world that called themselves socialist. The position they took was that socialism could not be said to have failed; it had simply never been tried, because, in Howe’s words, “there can be no socialism without democracy.”

The real question for the *Dissent* circle was Can there be socialism *with* democracy? To their credit, they took this

question seriously. They had seen power corrupt and absolute centralized power corrupt absolutely. Was it possible to avoid the totalitarian potential of socialism? One response argued that since all modern societies, including capitalist ones, are moving toward some form of economic collectivism, the crucial issue is whether controls will be democratic and participatory or bureaucratic and authoritarian. Another argued that power and authority should be scattered by way of autonomous industries, small private enterprises, and worker involvement in management, so as to create an economic version of checks and balances.

Howe admitted that the solutions suggested were tentative, inconclusive, and possibly unworkable. But he insisted that his utopian vision of socialism served a useful function, even if it could never be attained. Just as religious faith provides fallible humankind with a touchstone for private moral behavior, he argued, so too could faith in democratic socialism nudge people’s resistant consciences toward a more decent and generous level of public behavior. The epigraph to Howe’s collection of political and social essays, *Steady Work* (1966), restates this religious-secular equation in an astringently self-mocking way.

Once in Chelm, the mythical village of the East European Jews, a man was appointed to sit at the village gate and wait for the coming of the Messiah. He complained to the village elders that his pay was too low. “You are right,” they said to him, “the pay is low. But consider: the work is steady.”

The Messiah, alas, never arrived in the small towns of Eastern Europe. So by the tens of thousands the inhabitants of the *shtetls* sought a more tangible salvation in America. From 1880 to 1914 approximately one third of all Eastern European Jews emigrated, a total of nearly two million, most of them to the United States. They came to escape pogroms, poverty, and restricted horizons. Irving Howe told their story in fascinating detail and sweeping historical perspective in *World of Our Fathers*. He described the shock of adapting to an entirely new, mostly urban world. He traced their gradual entry into American politics (especially the leftist variety), business (especially Hollywood), labor unions (especially in the garment trade), and cul-

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Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") Can Israel survive without it?

There is incessant agitation for Israel to turn over most or perhaps even all of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") to the PLO. Such a move would inevitably lead to the creation of a Palestinian State—perhaps even with Jerusalem as its capital. Can Israel survive this dismemberment? Is it in the best interests of the United States?

What are the facts?

The Root of the conflict. The conflict between Israel and the Arabs is not about borders and not about the Palestinians. It is about Israel's very existence. The PLO still adheres to its infamous "phased plan." It calls for first creating a Palestinian state on any territory vacated by Israel and then using that state to foment a final allied Arab assault against the truncated Jewish state.

The Importance of territory. Many believe that in this age of missiles, territory is of little importance. But this is not the case. The Arab states have acquired over \$50

billion of the most advanced armaments since the end of the Gulf War. And those are not just "conventional" weapons—enormous quantities of tanks,

aircraft and much more. The Arab state possess large arsenals of chemical and biological weapons, and all of them work feverishly on the development of their nuclear potential. All of those weapons have only one single target and one single purpose: the destruction of the state of Israel. And that goal is not being cancelled for any agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

For both "conventional" war and for war of mass destruction, territory and topography are critical for self-defense and deterrence. The mountainous territory of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is an indispensable line of defense. It totally controls access to Israel's

heartland from the east. Israel needs this high ground for defense and to be able to peer deeply into enemy territory. The high ground allows Israel to detect missiles while they are still in the launch stage and to destroy them.

Would the "West Bank" be demilitarized? Even those who want Israel to retreat to her pre-1967 borders are agreed that the evacuated areas must be demilitarized. But that would be useless. Because the Palestinians will have thousands of trained soldiers, camouflaged as their police force. In case of war against Israel, these troops could be helicoptered in minutes to their positions, with armored

"Without Judea/Samaria (the 'West Bank')"

Israel would be totally indefensible; therefore, neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States are served by Israel's relinquishing control of the 'West Bank'."

forces reaching them within the same night. In any case, it is highly doubtful that the surrounding hostile Arab nations would allow such a military vacuum

to exist. And finally, there is the matter of terrorism. There are over fifteen Palestinian terror organizations that neither Yassir Arafat nor any other Palestinian authority can control. There would be a constant rain of Katyusha rockets launched into the Tel Aviv area and into the entire coastal plain, which contains 80% of Israel's population and of its industrial and military potential. Ben Gurion airport, every incoming and outgoing flight, would be subject to mortar fire or shoulder-held Stinger attack. Does anybody doubt that the Arabs would not exploit that irresistible opportunity?

Without the "West Bank" Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the professional opinion of over 100 U.S. generals and admirals. Israel's strong defensive posture makes it most inadvisable for Israel's enemies to attack her. But once this defensive strength is removed, a coordinated war against Israel can only be a matter of time. The example and fate of Czechoslovakia, which preparatory to the Second World War was dismantled and shorn of its defensive capacity, insistently come to mind. What does all this mean to the United States? In a part of the world in which our country has the most far-reaching geopolitical stakes, Israel is the guarantor of American interests in the area. With Israel in a position of weakness, the role of the United States in the area would collapse and radical states such as Syria, Iraq and Iran would dominate. That is why, despite the heady prospect of "peace in our time," neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States would be served by Israel's relinquishing control over the "West Bank."

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tural life. America gave the immigrants unprecedented security and opportunity, and gained in return an infusion of energy and enterprise, intellectual passion and theatrical flair.

Howe recognized the richness and historical uniqueness of the Jewish experience in the United States. But he also saw the costs of success: the dispersion of bustling city neighborhoods into bland, assimilated suburbs, the weakening of a strain of "intense moral seriousness" as Jews moved up the economic ladder. Most of all Howe regretted the inevitable loss of an entire culture centered on the Yiddish language—a colorful world of poetry, prose, theater, and ritual that the immigrants brought with them, only to find their children and grandchildren losing interest as they became Americanized. Not content with teaching, editing *Dissent*, and turning out a steady stream of books, reviews, and essays, Howe took on the task of overseeing the translation into English of the best of Yiddish writing even as the store of readers and writers declined. When in low spirits he would ask himself, "Another lost cause?"

HOWE'S attraction to lost causes was a direct consequence of his longing for the "heroic," a word that appears often and almost always with approval in his writing. But who could have imagined that Irving Howe, the prideful man of the left, would find an empathic hero in T. E. Lawrence? The famed Lawrence of Arabia, author of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, was an acknowledged agent of British imperialism, using his entrée into the Arab leadership to further British military advantage in the First World War against the Turks, then allied to the Germans.

Yet Howe's long essay "T. E. Lawrence: The Problem of Heroism" is one of his finest, because it draws on feelings far deeper than political sympathy: "If we come to him admiring whatever in his life was extraordinary, we remain with him out of a sense that precisely the special, even the exotic in Lawrence may illuminate whatever in our life is ordinary." But Howe was not wholly uncritical of this limelight-seeking adventurer. He saw Lawrence's early feats of physical endurance and his later feats of military bravura as "in part symptoms of a vanity which took the form

of needing always to seem original."

Like Lawrence, Howe yearned to play a heroic role in some socially transforming historical event. His own vanity took the form of needing always to seem more principled and militant than his political adversaries. Even when he expressed doubts about the nature and viability of socialism, he could not forgo a posture of self-righteous superiority to those, especially old comrades, who no longer shared his dwindling faith. Still, there is something admirable in his unwavering insistence that American society could be fairer, more fraternal, more pervasively democratic, than it is. But he could hardly have found it heroic to

wind up de facto on the fringe of the left wing of the Democratic Party.

Irving Howe's real heroism was acted out less on the ideological plane of politics than in the imaginative arena of literature. Over the past several decades, as the idols of his youth—George Orwell, Edmund Wilson, and Lionel Trilling—disappeared from the scene, Howe remained, along with Alfred Kazin and Robert Alter, among our most reliable literary critics, the most open to writers old and new, the most patient and penetrating, the most accessible. He was, in Philip Roth's grudging phrase, "a real reader," for whom literature was a way of keeping the soul alive. ☼

BRIEF REVIEWS



Max Beerbohm Caricatures

by N. John Hall.
Yale, 240 pages, \$45.00.

"The incomparable Max" was indeed incomparable—a writer of wit, charm, and originality, and a caricaturist with an "unfailing eye for the centre of a situation" and a "gift for fixing it in a memorably comic form." The collection of drawings presented by Mr. Hall covers Beerbohm's field of victims thoroughly. Authors, artists, actors, politicians, and royalty were all his targets. The text and notes are well written (exceptionally so for the art-book genre) and reinforced by quotations from Max and his highly articulate contemporaries. Max gave up cartooning by 1942, because, he explained, "I began to remember people more or less exactly as they were, and was obliged to put in the exaggerations consciously." An earlier description of his methods emphasized memory, not direct vision, as the basis of his resolutely unrealistic art. "I cannot," he wrote a friend, "imagine a worse thing befalling anyone than to see the streets peopled with my creations. It

has never befallen me." The late drawings from the years shortly before Max "laid aside" his pencil show clearly what had happened. The subjects are recognizable, but they are no longer victims. The gadfly had lost his sting, and Max, a sound critic, knew it. But in his heyday he gave wonderfully effective and amusing jabs that can still draw a chuckle.

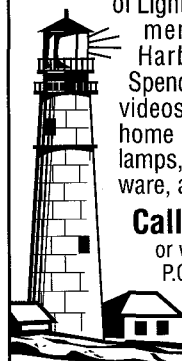
Snow in America

by Bernard Mergen.
Smithsonian, 321 pages, \$24.95.

Professor Mergen uses snow and responses to it as an illustration of both the practical and the emotional development of American character. Snow has changed from a moral resource encouraging endurance and ingenuity to a public nuisance to an ecological and economic resource. Poets have made it a metaphor for states ranging from euphoria to despair. This intelligent study is not ivory-tower theorizing. It deals firmly with street cleaning, the growth of the ski industry, water usage, winter carnivals, and even fashions in the making of snow forts and snowmen. It does all this well.

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Paul Delaroche

by Stephen Bann.
Princeton, 304 pages,
\$49.50.

Delaroche (1797–1856) was an early success as a painter and remained successful throughout his life. He has been ignored since his death. Mr. Bann undertakes to account for this odd situation and hopes to revive interest in Delaroche. Speculation about family tensions and rivalries is not much help in either of these causes, but examination of the paintings is interesting. Delaroche was a history painter, but not in the moralizing, inspirational manner of David. The post-Napoleonic public had seen more than enough of that sort of thing. Delaroche selected historical episodes likely to attract interest—the murder of the Duc de Guise, the death of Mazarin—and painted them with great attention to details of costume, well-composed and plausible arrangements of the participants, and no indication of his own opinion of the event. He is reported to have said, on his first view of a daguerreotype, "From today painting is dead." He in fact became much interested in photography. It did for the present what he tried to do for the past—it got the shot. Delaroche remained, in effect, a paparazzo with a brush, while painters in general turned to agitation, editorializing, psychological inquiry, and the cultivation of individualistic brushwork. Delaroche was a fine technician, though, with a nice eye for the dramatic moment. He deserves the reappraisal that Mr. Bann hopes to provoke in honor of his 200th birthday.

Agent of Destiny:

The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott

by John S. D. Eisenhower.
Free Press, 480 pages,
\$27.50.

Winfield Scott (1786–1866), after some frittering with a law career, joined the Army and came to prominence in the War of 1812, when he actually won a battle in the United States' bumbling attack on the Canadian border. He was one of the most notable of the young men who replaced those relics of the Revolution still in control of military affairs. The other was Andrew Jackson, and the two bumped heads off and on for years.

When not engaged in winning the Mexican War and similar military duties, Scott dabbled in politics—unsuccessfully. He had an incorrigible habit of speaking his mind. When the Civil War broke out, he had been in command of the Army for many years and was too fat to mount a horse and in poor health generally. He was replaced by the overcautious George B. McClellan. He had had, however, a varied, exciting, most useful career, and his biographer makes a fine story of it. Mr. Eisenhower, a retired brigadier general and a former ambassador with sound Washington connections, understands and clearly explains both military actions and the politics lurking behind them. One learns, among other things, that the partisan habit of angling for the next election while ignoring current problems was well entrenched so long ago that it should probably be considered respectable. Mr. Eisenhower has the right touch for a biographer; he gives the impression that he thoroughly enjoyed learning about his subject and is delighted to share a great story with his readers.

Cactus Tracks & Cowboy Philosophy

by Baxter Black.
Crown, 288 pages, \$23.00.

Whether the verses and anecdotes of the "Cowboy Poet & Former Large Animal Vet" are genuine folk art or a canny and sophisticated simulation, they are genuinely amusing.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

Recent books by Atlantic authors:

Crabcakes by James Alan McPherson. Simon & Schuster, 288 pages, \$23.00. James Alan McPherson is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*.

Violence and Childhood in the Inner City edited by Joan McCord. Cambridge University Press, 348 pages, \$59.95/\$19.95. One of the essays in this book, by Elijah Anderson, appeared in somewhat different form as "The Code of the Streets," *The Atlantic's* cover story for May, 1994.

Pursuit of a Woman on the Hinge of History by Hans Koning. Brookline Books/Lumen Editions, 224 pages, \$15.95. Koning is a regular contributor to *The Atlantic*. This is his twelfth novel.



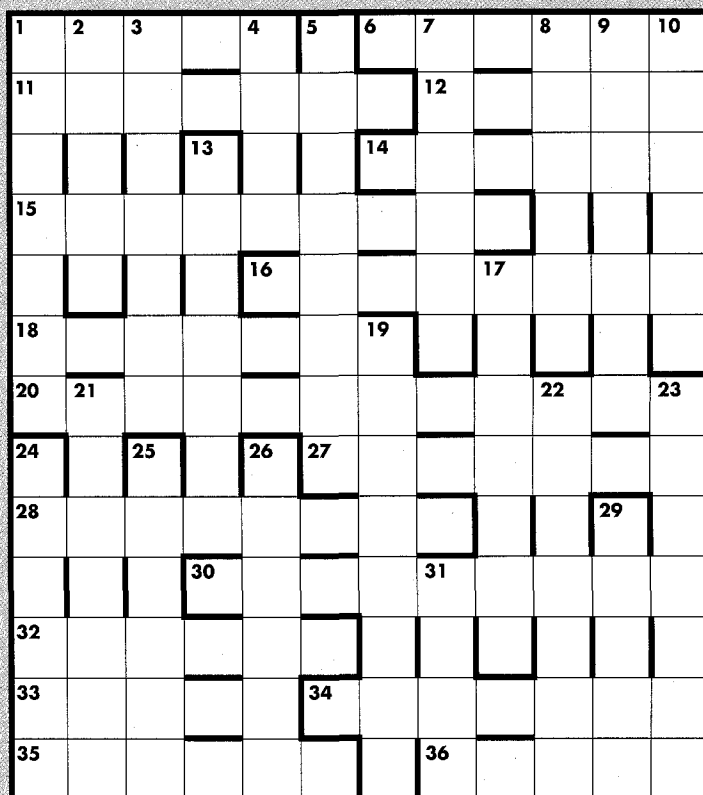
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Celebrating the First

In this puzzle we invite solvers to 20 Across with us. Each time a clue answer is too short for its place in the diagram, you must scramble that word and *add one letter* to forge a longer word or phrase. The added letter is the same throughout the puzzle, giving you a 20 Across. Clue answers include five capitalized words; the anagrammed longer entries include four capitalized words, a hyphenated word, and two two-word phrases; the entry at 19 Down is an uncommon word made of common elements.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 102.



Across

1. Delighted group around the first of Ninety-Eight (4)
6. Russian space station, used without US, bogged down (5)
11. Clever, like Egyptian king and England's leader (6)
12. Mayor in DC has thick skin (4)
14. Commotion about a flight (5)
15. Collectively, actors in *Heartless Gals* ejected stuff (8)
16. Valet is off during the summer (7)
18. In answer, German makes cross (6)
27. Sea god's torn it apart (6)
28. Star in *Mission Impossible* runs squad car (7)
30. Melvin is in pain, working in a foundry (8)
32. Tips in dividing kitchen vessels (6)

33. Designer doesn't have autograph, or does? (4)
34. Story about no-good mass of confusion (6)
35. Leave pie or ice cream in your ear (6)
36. Minister loses head in burning desire? (5)

Down

1. Flower planted in the center and toward the rear (6)
2. Feign a temperature, having a bug (4)
3. Native found refreshment in back of tavern (6)
4. Bribe as described by chief of police (3)
5. Five and Ten quit moving (7)
7. Transparent pair of leotards confiscated by coach (5)
8. Corrects about 100 laws (6)
9. I mostly stick with guys who keep cool (6)
10. To put your foot down is/isn't rude (6)
13. Want carpet brought back with hospital cot (6)
17. Plastic material in top-notch art gallery (7)
19. Spoils infested by ten furry critters (7)
21. Painter regarding *Parisian Black* (6)
22. Bug popular religious group (6)
23. Drank fermented grape juice (including bit of gin) for shot in the arm (6)
24. Investigated police error in South Dakota (6)
25. Arab redistributed US aid (5)
26. Terri—confused essayist? (5)
29. After introduction, talk in the street with director Fritz (4)
31. NASA mismanaged capital (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

An article in The Wall Street Journal the other day said, "Top officials of Columbia/HCA Healthcare Corp. engaged in a 'systemic' effort to defraud government health-care programs, federal investigators state in an affidavit unsealed yesterday in Florida." Has my medical-school training led me astray? Can systemic possibly be the right word here? Systematic?

James Wallman, M.D.
Redlands, Calif.

You can find meanings like "of or relating to a system" for both words in most dictionaries—a technicality in those

federal investigators' favor. Nonetheless, as you know, *systemic* tends to mean "within or throughout a biological system" (such as the nervous or circulatory system or an entire organism),

whereas for the most part *systematic* means "according to a method or plan." Unless something very peculiar is going on in this legal case, *systemic* does seem out of kilter here.

Today I received an E-mail message from a professor at an Ivy League university which included the following: "This impacts on when it began to influence political ideas. . . . The question of when it began to impact on political thought can be studied through the three other texts that it clearly did influence. . . ."

I object to the use of *impact* as a verb to mean *affect*, and the redundant "on" strikes me as a sign that the writer recognizes, perhaps despite himself, that *impact* isn't the right word for

the job here. I never use *impact* in this way, and I tell my students not to. But language changes, and this usage seems to have won acceptance among many college professors and journalists. I'm beginning to wonder

whether we anti-impacters have already lost the battle and *impact* as a verb is here to stay.

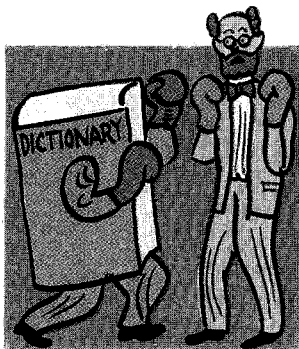
Do you think we should keep resisting the *impact* of *impact*? Or is this verb now a legitimate choice even in contexts that haven't anything to do with physical objects crashing into each other?

C. J. Fraser
Hong Kong, China

Resist, resist! Eighty-four percent of the usage panel of the current, third edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary* "disapproves of the construction *to impact on* . . . and fully 95 percent disapproves of the use of *impact* as a transitive verb" meaning *affect*, according to a note in the dictionary. It continues, "But even these figures do not reflect the degree of distaste with which critics view the usage. . . ." In the oldest extant use of the verb, it means something like *pack* or *wedge*, but it may also properly appear, as you note, in contexts relating to physical collisions ("Meteorites often *impact* the moon").

I have been in a continuous argument about this with every single person I know (except my mother) for about a month and a half now. What is the plural of beer? I have always thought the plural was beer, not beers. Please respond, so that (hopefully) I can rub it in everyone's face that I am correct. Thank you VERY much.

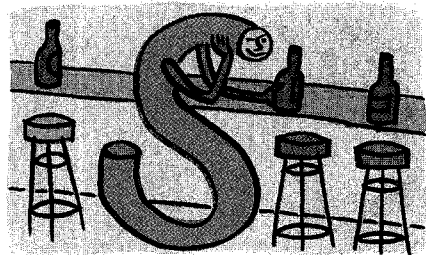
Molly Huddleston
Portland, Oreg.



Do you mean the plural as in "He liked to have a couple of *beers* when he got home from work"? Or as in "Colorado is known for its *beer*"—which isn't actually a plural? Or as in "Colorado is known for its *deer*"—which, of course, is a different word? I'm sorry to have to break it to you,

but the plural of *beer* is *beers*.

There are in fact nouns with a plural the same as the singular. These tend to name creatures that have been known to English since ancient times and have been hunted or fished or were used for food, such as *deer* and *bear* and *fowl*. In most cases a form with an *s* on the end is also a proper plural, and this plural is likelier to refer to a limited number of individuals than to a multitude ("We feasted on two roast *fowls* in a room overlooking a pond full of *waterfowl* and *trout*"). But this distinction—which is not a rule, only a tendency, and one to which many exceptions exist—doesn't generally apply to liquids, since liquid *en masse* is a quantity of liquid, not a number of liquids, and is therefore singular ("Maybe we shouldn't have washed the meal down with so much *beer*"). Only when one is talking about individual glasses or bottles or brands ("So many *beers* to choose from!") does the word become plural.



Have you recently had a language dispute that you would like this column to resolve? Write to Word Court in care of *The Atlantic Monthly*, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send E-mail to MsGrammar@TheAtlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court.

The **MACALLAN:**
The Search

J T N E H S H E R R Y C A S K A
H E S V I E J T O T V I L R Y S
R I D I G R W H P S H R Q E D M
I G E F H U E E G L O E S H C O
X H I Y L T E M E L A I M T V O
I T H T A A D A L T N C X A W T
L E C N N M R C G G W O E E L H
E E A E D J A A U H M E S H X T
E N L W S S M L E L I I L Q S C
H V L T T S A L M O N L D V E W
T O E L I R Z A G Q J D L S E E
L U G G Y B O N N E T S P I S N
S E I H C L E R E T S A E P E P
X G A G S L A I N T E X S G F S
E I R E A F E H T Y R R E H S A
H Z C H C R I V E R S P E Y U L

The Macallan invites you to find and circle these words in the grid above.

place	smooth	wee dram	roll cast
aye	The Elixir	Easter Elchies	ghillies
River Spey	mature	twelve	The Malt
Sherry the faerie	Highlands	eighteen	sherry cask
luggy bonnet	salmon	twenty-five	heather
Slainte	The Macallan ✓	Craigellachie	singular

Aye. The Macallan. The name alone conjures up images of the mystical Scottish Highlands—a place where silvery Atlantic salmon leap from the River Spey below Easter Elchies, Macallan’s ancient manor house; where tweed-clad ghillies tie down luggy bonnets and roll cast against a cutting north wind; where a wee dram or two of *The Elixir*—so smooth . . . so mature—is the only

just reward among locals. You see, The Malt can come from only one place. Just outside the town of Craigellachie, where spring water runs pure and purple heather blankets the hills, The Macallan slumbers (undisturbed!) in rare sherry casks for twelve, eighteen, or twenty-five years. Long enough (so they say) for Sherry, our *tetchy* distillery faerie, to work her singular ways on us all. Slainte!

Buzzwords



Exhaustive research, recently undertaken, suggested to the Directors of The Macallan that smooth and ‘mature’ might well be buzzwords to be aptly used in any future advertising for our succulent malt whisky.

Ever anxious to explore the latest ‘trends,’ our Publicity Advisers have buckled to.

If such innovation can prompt you to a little in-depth research of your own — a dabble, for instance, in the luscious golden profundities of The Macallan itself — our flirtation with modernism will not have been in vain.



THE MACALLAN.
THE SINGLE MALT
SCOTCH.

THE MACALLAN® Scotch Whisky. 43% alc./vol.
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